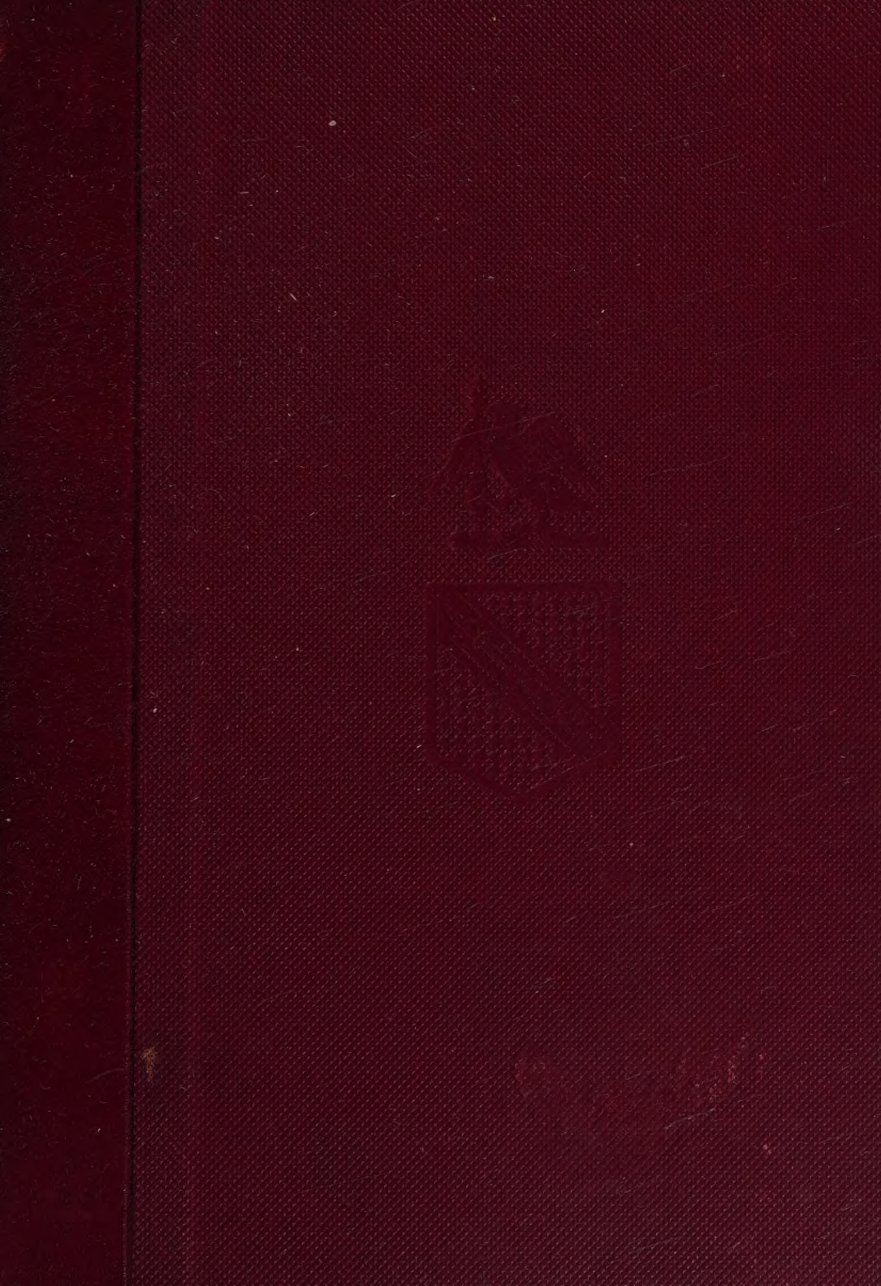


The Merry Wives of Windsor

Falstaff Gets Into the Basket

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR *Act* III *Scene* 3

Booklovers Edition

Merry Wives of Windsor

by

William Shakespeare

With Introductions, Notes, Glossary, Critical Comments, and Method of Study

The University Society
New York

Copyright, 1901
BY
THE UNIVERSITY SOCIETY

THE
MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

Preface.

The Editions. The earliest known edition of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is a Quarto printed in 1602 with the following title-page:—

"A most pleasuant and excellent conceited Comedie, of Sir *Iohn Falstaffe* and the merrie Wiues of Windsor. Entermixed with sundrie variable and pleasing humours of Sir *Hugh* the Welch Knight, Iustice *Shallow,* and his wise Cousin M. *Slender.* With the swaggering vaine of Auncient *Pistoll,* and Corporall *Nym.* By *William Shakespeare.* As it hath bene diuers times Acted by the right Honorable my Lord Chamberlaines Seruants. Both before her Maiestie, and elsewhere. London Printed by T. C. for Arthur Iohnson, and are to be sold at his shop in Powles Churchyard, at the signe of the Flower de Leuse and the Crowne" (reprinted in the Cambridge Shakespeare and in Hazlitt's *Shakespeare's Library*; a facsimile is included in Dr. Furnival's Shakespeare Quartos, Quaritch). A second Quarto, a mere reprint of the first, appeared in 1619.

In the first Folio the play occupies pp. 39-60; its length there is more than double that of the Quartos, from which it differs to such an extent as to give the impression of being a revised and expanded version of a mere garbled and pirated sketch.

Date of Composition. The first Quarto was entered in the Stationers' Registers under date 18th Jan. 1602;

the play was probably written after *Henry V.*, *i.e.* after the middle of the year 1599. In the epilogue to 2 *Henry IV.* a promise had been given to continue the story with Sir John in it; this promise was not kept in *Henry V.*; and "The Merry Wives," according to a well authenticated tradition, was composed by command of the Queen, "who obliged Shakespeare to write a Play of Sir John Falstaff in Love, and which I am very well assured he performed in a fortnight: a prodigious thing when all is well contrived, and carried on without the least confusion" (Gildon, 1710; Dennis first mentions the tradition in 1702; *cp.* title-page of 1602 edition).

The date of the first composition of the play may with certainty be placed at about 1600 (probably Christmas, 1599).*

An old tradition identifies Justice Shallow with Shakespeare's old enemy, Sir Thomas Lucy (of the deer-poaching story); Lucy died in July, 1600, and it is held by some that the Poet would not have waited "till his butt was in the grave before he aimed his shafts at him." At the same time it is noteworthy that the "dozen white luces" is only found in the Folio, not in the Quarto editions. The question at issue, on which scholars are divided, is whether the Quarto represents a pirated edition of an early sketch of the play, revised and enlarged in the first Folio version, or whether both versions are to be referred back to the same original. In support of the former theory it is alleged that the substitution of "King" in the Folio (I. i. 112) for "council" of the Quarto, the possible reference to the cheapening of knighthood ("These knights will hack," II. i. 52), and similar internal evidence, point to the reign of James I.; these scholars there-

* Shakespeare acted in *Every Man in His Humour* in 1598, and the two plays have much in common (*cp. e.g.* Ford and Kitely; Nym's reiteration of 'humour,' etc.).

In the *Return from Parnassus*, acted at Cambridge, probably Christmas, 1601, the French Doctor is obviously an imitation of Dr. Caius.

fore date the Folio version about 1605. On the other hand, Mr. Daniel (Introduction to his editions) maintains that "the character of the publishers of the Quarto, its proved omissions, its recomposed passages (*i.e.* passages actually the work, not of Shakespeare, but of the note-taker), its retention of (essential) passages omitted in the Folio, the complication in both of the time-plot . . . lead almost inevitably to the conclusion that there was but one original for both Quarto and Folio." He points out further that the alleged internal evidence of later revision is of little real value, but it is somewhat difficult to get rid of these minutiæ, and some slight revision after 1603 is not inconsistent with this latter theory.

The Sources. This comedy of contemporary manners probably owed very little to older plays or novels, but it contains incidents not uncommon in Italian and other stories. In the following tales a suspicious husband is baffled much in the same way as Master Ford:—(1) The tale from *Il Pecorone di Ser Giovanni Fiorentino*; (2) The old English version of this story in *The Fortunate, the Deceived, and the Unfortunate Lovers,* 1632, reprinted in 1685; (3) The Tale in *Straparola* similar to that in *Il Pecorone*; (4) The Tales of the Two Lovers of Pisa, from Tarlton's *Newes out of Pergatorie,* 1590; (5) The second tale from *Straparola,* in which the youth makes love to three ladies at once (*cp.* Hazlitt's *Shakespeare's Library,* Part I. vol. iii.).

Herne. It would seem that there existed in Shakespeare's day a tradition at Windsor that Herne was one of the keepers of the Park, who, having committed an offence for which he feared to be disgraced, hung himself upon an oak, which was ever afterwards haunted by his ghost.

The difference between the Quarto and Folio reference to the story is noteworthy; the former reads:—

"Oft have you heard since Horne the hunter dyed . . .".

The Folio makes the tale a more ancient one (*cp.* IV. iv. 36-38).

The earliest notice of "Herne's oak" is in a "Plan of the Town and Castle of Windsor and Little Park" (Eton, 1742); in a map a tree marked "Sir John Falstaff's oak" is represented as being on the edge of a pit just on the outside of an avenue which was formed in the seventeenth century, and known as Queen Elizabeth's Walk. Halliwell first printed, in his edition of the Quarto, a set of verses "Upon Herne's Oak being cut down in the spring of 1796." Antiquarian research has demonstrated the exactness of Shakespeare's knowledge of Old Windsor (*cp.* Tighe and Davis' *Annals of Windsor,* Vol. i. pp. 673-686).

Duration of Action. As the play stands in the Quartos and Folios it is impossible to arrange the time consistently, owing to the confusion as regards Falstaff's interviews with the Merry Wives in Act III. Scene v.; the errors are probably due to compression of the play for stage purposes. The first part of the scene, according to Mr. Daniel (*Transactions of New Shakespeare Society,* 1878-9), is inseparably connected with the day of Falstaff's first interview with Mrs Ford; the second part is as inseparably connected with the day of the second interview. The first part clearly shows us Falstaff in the afternoon, just escaped from his ducking in the Thames; the second part as clearly shows him in the early morning about to keep his second appointment with Mrs Ford. He proposes to make Ford's portion of the scene commence the 4th Act, changing *good morrow* into *good even* (Act III. v. 28) and *this morning* into *to-morrow morning* (Act III. v. 46). According to this arrangement the following time analysis would result:—Day 1, Act I. Sc. i. to iv.; Day 2, Act II. Sc. i. to iii., Act III. Sc. i. to iv., and the Quickly portion of Sc. v.; Day 3, the Ford portion of Act III. Sc. v. to the end of the play.

If this suggestion is carried out, a further change is

necessary in Act V. i. 14, where *this morning* should be read in place of *yesterday*.

Time of Action. Though the play was in all probability composed after *Henry V.*, the action may be supposed to take place after the events recorded at the end of *2 Henry IV.*; the further degradation of the character of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives* belongs to the early years of "the madcap prince's" reign, when he had already renounced "the tutor and the feeder of his riot." The characters intimately associated with Falstaff were transferred with him from *2 Henry IV.*, with the exception of 'Nym,' who appears for the first time in *Henry V.*; Shallow's 'cousin,' Slender, of *The Merry Wives*, takes the place of 'Silence' of *2 Henry IV.*; Mrs Quickly is identical only in name with the Hostess Quickly of 1, *2 Henry IV.* and *Henry V.*

Windsor in 1607, showing Garter Inn.
From Norden's bird's eye view of Windsor (1607)

Critical Comments.

I.

Argument.

I. Sir John Falstaff has forsaken the warlike pursuits familiar to his friend Prince Hal, afterwards Henry V. of England, and is now devoted to the peaceful occupations of poaching and love-making, though not neglecting the drinking-cups of the tavern. Two women of Windsor, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, engage his attention at the same time; and he resolves to lay siege to their affections, notwithstanding both are married.

Mistress Page's daughter Anne is sought in marriage by Slender—largely through his friends; by Hugh Evans, a Welsh curate and schoolmaster; by Dr. Caius, a French physician; and by Fenton, a courtier.

II. Mistress Page and Mistress Ford each receive a love-letter from Falstaff, and upon comparing their missives they find them almost identical. Being women of wit as well as of virtue, they agree to work together towards humiliating the knight for his presumption. Mistress Ford makes an appointment with him. His servants inform the husbands of the two women. Ford, under an assumed name, meets Falstaff and, pretending to be a suitor also for Mistress Ford, worms from the boastful Falstaff the secret of his appointment with her.

III. Falstaff is punctual to his meeting with Mistress Ford. But before he arrives, she and Mistress Page prepare a large basket of soiled linen in which Falstaff is to be conveyed to the river, under the pretense that this is the only way he can escape from the house. The pre-

tense turns to reality when Ford actually arrives. And the ruse of the clothes-basket deceives both gallant and husband. Falstaff is dumped into the Thames, whence he emerges much bedraggled, but with ardor so slightly quenched as to become enkindled again upon receipt of a message from Mistress Ford granting him a second interview. Nor has he gained discretion from his first mishap, for he unwittingly informs Ford of this rendezvous also, and of the means whereby he escaped his former predicament. The thoroughly aroused husband redoubles his vigilance.

IV. Falstaff keeps his second appointment with Mistress Ford. Her husband again surprises them. The clothes-basket is sent down as before; and while Ford is ransacking it under the firm belief that it again conceals Falstaff, the latter is dressed in woman's clothes and escapes thus disguised, though not avoiding sundry blows from the irate husband. Mistress Ford and Mistress Page then tell their husbands the truth about the Falstaff episodes. The men are delighted to find their wives faithful, and the four conjointly arrange a third and final hoax which contemplates a night meeting in Windsor Park.

Meanwhile Anne Page's love-affairs are becoming tangled. She loves Fenton. Her father has chosen Slender. Her mother privately favors Dr. Caius. When the third prank on Falstaff is prepared, Anne and her parents make conflicting plans to utilize the meeting for bringing their separate matrimonial schemes to a head.

V. Falstaff is persuaded to go to Windsor Park, wearing a buck's head. Anne Page and her friends impersonate fairies and burn him with tapers. Ford, Page, and their wives reveal themselves to him, reproach him for his attempted villainy, and finally pardon him. The wretched Falstaff finds his only satisfaction in hearing that Anne Page has married Fenton, despite the counter-schemes of her father and mother.

McSpadden: *Shakespearian Synopses.*

II.

The Request of Queen Elizabeth.

Old Queen Bess can scarcely have been a great judge of art, or she would not have conceived the extravagant notion of wanting to see Falstaff in love; she would have understood that if there was anything impossible to him it was this. She would also have realized that his figure was already a rounded whole and could not be reproduced. It is true that in the Epilogue to *Henry IV.* (which, however, is probably not by Shakespeare) a continuation of the history is promised, in which, "for anything I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already he be killed with your hard opinions;" but no such continuation is to be found in *Henry V.*, evidently because Shakespeare felt that Falstaff had played out his part. Neither is *The Merry Wives* the promised continuation, for Falstaff does not die, and the action is conceived as an earlier episode in his life, though it is entirely removed from its historical setting and brought forward into the Poet's own time, so unequivocally that there is even in the fifth Act a direct mention of "our radiant queen" in Windsor Castle.

The Poet must have set himself unwillingly to the fulfilment of the "radiant queen's" barbarous wish, and tried to make the best of a bad business. He was compelled entirely to ruin his inimitable Falstaff, and degrade the fat knight into an ordinary avaricious, wine-bibbing, amatory old fool. Along with him, he resuscitated the whole merry company from *Henry V.*, who had all come to an unpleasant end—Bardolph, Pistol, Nym, and Dame Quickly—making the men repeat themselves with a difference, endowing Pistol with the splendid phrase "The world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open," and giving to Dame Quickly softened and more commonplace lineaments. From the Second Part of *Henry IV.*, too, he introduces Justice Shallow, placing him in a less

friendly relation to Falstaff, and giving him a highly comic nephew, Slender, who, in his vanity and pitifulness, is like a first sketch for Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night.*

BRANDES: *William Shakespeare.*

III.

Delineation of the Play.

The principal action of this comedy—the adventures of Falstaff with the Merry Wives—sweeps on with a rapidity of movement which hurries us forward to the dénouement as irresistibly as if the actors were under the influence of that destiny which belongs to the empire of tragedy. No reverses, no disgraces, can save Falstaff from his final humiliation. The net is around him, but he does not see the meshes; he fancies himself the deceiver, but he is the deceived. He will stare Ford "out of his wits," he will "awe him with his cudgel," yet he lives "to be carried in a basket like a barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown into the Thames." But his confidence is undaunted: "I will be thrown into Etna, as I have been into the Thames, ere I will leave her"; yet "since I plucked geese, played truant, and whipped top, I knew not what it was to be beaten till lately." Lastly, he will rush upon a third adventure: "This is the third time, I hope good luck lies in odd numbers"; yet his good luck ends in "I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass." The real jealousy of Ford most skilfully helps on the merry devices of his wife; and with equal skill does the Poet make him throw away his jealousy, and assist in the last plot against the "unclean knight." The misadventures of Falstaff are most agreeably varied. The disguise of the old woman of Brentford puts him altogether in a different situation from his suffocation in the buck basket; and the fairy machinery of Herne's Oak car-

ries the catastrophe out of the region of comedy into that of romance.

The movement of the principal action is beautifully contrasted with the occasional repose of the other scenes. The Windsor of the time of Elizabeth is presented to us, as the quiet country town, sleeping under the shadow of its neighbour the castle. Amidst its gabled houses, separated by pretty gardens, from which the elm and the chestnut and the lime throw their branches across the unpaved road, we find a goodly company, with little to do but gossip and laugh, and make sport out of each other's cholers and weaknesses. We see Master Page training his "fallow greyhound"; and we go with Master Ford "a-birding." We listen to the "pribbles and prabbles" of Sir Hugh Evans and Justice Shallow, with a quiet satisfaction; for they talk as unartificial men ordinarily talk, without much wisdom, but with good temper and sincerity. We find ourselves in the days of ancient hospitality, when men could make their fellows welcome without ostentatious display, and half a dozen neighbours "could drink down all unkindness" over "a hot venison pasty." The more busy inhabitants of the town have time to tattle, and to laugh, and be laughed at. Mine Host of the Garter is the prince of hosts; he is the very soul of fun and good temper; he is not solicitous whether Falstaff sit "at ten pounds a week" or at two; he readily takes "the withered serving man for a fresh tapster"; his confidence in his own cleverness is delicious—"am I politic, am I subtle, am I a Machiavel?"—the Germans "shall have my horses, but I'll make them pay, I'll sauce them." When he loses his horses, and his "mind is heavy," we rejoice that Fenton will give him "a hundred pound in gold" more than his loss. His contrivances to manage the fray between the furious French doctor and the honest Welsh parson are productive of the happiest situations.

KNIGHT: *Pictorial Shakspere.*

IV.

Falstaff Out of His Sphere.

The truth is, Falstaff is plainly out of his sphere; and he shows a sad want of his usual sagacity and good sense in getting into it—in supposing for a moment that he could inspire such a passion in such a place: nor does it seem probable that the Poet would have exhibited him thus, but that he were moved thereto by somewhat else than the native promptings of his genius. For of love in any right or respectable sense Sir John is essentially incapable; and to represent him otherwise, had been to contradict, not carry out, his character. Shakespeare doubtless understood this; and, being thus reduced to the alternative of committing a gross breach of decorum or of making the hero unsuccessful, the moral sanity of his genius left him no choice. Accordingly Sir John is here conspicuous not so much for what he practises as for what is practised upon him; he being, in fact, the dupe and victim of his own heroism, and provoking laughter more by that he suffers than by that he does. So that the internal evidence of the play strongly favours the tradition of the Queen's requesting to see Falstaff in love; as such request affords the only clear solution of the Poet's representing one who was plainly a favourite with him in so unsuitable a quality. For, if we may believe Hazlitt, "wits and philosophers seldom shine in that character"; and, whether this be true or not, it is certain that "Sir John by no means comes off with flying colours."

But Falstaff, notwithstanding these drawbacks, is still so far himself that "naught but himself can be his conqueror." If he be overmatched, it is not so much by the strength or skill of his antagonists, as from his being persuaded, seemingly against his will and for the pleasure of others, into a line of adventure where he is not qualified to thrive. His incomparable art of turning adversities into commodities; the good-humoured strategy

whereby he manages to divert off all unpleasant feeling of his vices and frailties; the marvellous agility and aptness of which, with a vesture of odd and whimsical constructions, at once hides the offensive and discovers the comical features of his conduct; the same towering impudence and sublime effrontery, which so lift him aloft in his subsequent exploits; and the overpowering eloquence of exaggeration, with which he delights to set off and heighten whatsoever is most ludicrous in his own person or situation;—all these qualities, though not in their full bloom and vigour, are here to be seen in triumphant exercise.

Upon the whole, however, this bringing forth of Sir John more for exposure than for exhibition is not altogether grateful to those whom he has so often convulsed into health: though he still gives us wholesome shakings, we feel that it costs him too much: the rare exhilaration he affords us elsewhere, and even here, invests him with a sort of humorous reverence; insomuch that we can hardly help pitying while we approve his merited, yet scarcely merited, shames and failures; and we would fain make out some excuse for him on the score of these slips' occurring earlier in his life, when experience had not yet disciplined away the natural vanity which may sometimes lead a man of genius to fancy himself the object of the tender passion. And in like manner we are apt to apologize for the Poet's exposure of his and our favourite, on the ground that, being to represent him in an enterprise where he could not deserve success, nor even work for it but by knavery, he was under a strong moral necessity of causing him not only to be thwarted, but to become the laughing-stock of those who thwart him, and, which is especially galling to one so wit-proud as Sir John, "to stand at the taunt of one that makes fritters of English." And we are the more disposed to leniency towards Falstaff amid his unparalleled swampings, forasmuch as his merry persecutors are but a sort of decorous, respectable, commonplace people, who borrow their chief

importance from the victim of their mischievous sport; and if they are not so bad as to make us wish him success, neither are they so good that we like to see them grow at his expense.

HUDSON: *The Works of Shakespeare.*

V.

Analysis of Falstaff's Character.

Two features strike us at a glance as being clear and prominent in Falstaff's character; on the one hand, his great wealth of wit, his inexhaustible store of happy devices, plots and pranks, and the indestructibility of his good humour; on the other hand, his equally great amount of sensuality, love of pleasure, and excessive carnal lusts. The *point de vue* of his life, and the centre upon which all his aims and actions turn, is, that his wit, his inventive talents, and his shrewdness shall in all cases furnish him with the means of gratifying his sensual desires, and protect him in case of need. Enjoyments of every description he must have; and it is only a good joke, a successful piece of mischief—to him the greatest of all enjoyments—that he thinks even more attractive than a glass of sack and the charms of Dolly Tear-sheet. Falstaff is the most consummate epicurean, in the form of a knight of Shakspeare's day but—owing to a halo of ingenious and irresistible wit, and an ideal mental freedom, which humorously disregard all difficulties, and even the whole seriousness of life—an epicurean who appears to a certain extent spiritualised, sublimated into a sort of poetical ideal, which raises him far above the usual run of common rakes, and prevents moral indignation from casting its judgement upon him. Falstaff does not possess any great passions, because to gratify them would cost him too much trouble, and afford an indeed great,

but after all only a passing enjoyment. He has also nothing in common with actual wickedness and gross crimes and vices, because the former undermine their own enjoyment, and also because they are inseparably connected with hate; moreover, great crimes are accomplished only with trouble and exertion, and are always followed by a dread of punishment; gross vices, lastly, necessarily blunt and deaden the sense of enjoyment. Neither is he at all jealous or envious—for envy is its own tormentor—he is more inclined to be glad to see others enjoying themselves, and even helps his boon companions in attaining their desires, as long as these do not cause himself any inconvenience or annoyance. But as regards the lesser sins, such as bragging, lying and deceiving, he is not over-particular, and has even no great objections to a little thieving, when it can be done easily, and especially when connected with some good joke. He trusts to his wit to save him from any unpleasant consequences of such *bagatelles*; such things he considers natural and unavoidable because he cannot find any enjoyment or procure the means of any enjoyment without them. If this were possible he would rather not be guilty of a single transgression, except as a joke, and even though not altogether good and virtuous, still he would like—without a struggle, however—to be upright and honest. It is true he likes virtue even less than vice, because it demands a greater amount of energy, and, worst of all, self-denial and self-control. He does not believe in virtue; he thinks it a delusive piece of sophistry, a mere illusion to suppose that any one should give up enjoyment and pleasure against the instincts of nature, in order to obtain so-called true happiness. To him, therefore, virtue, like honour, is a mere 'word,' a thing that no one possesses, that has 'no skill in surgery,' but at most is an honour to the dead who are insensible to it; hence a mere 'scutcheon,' so 'he'll none of it.' And yet, at the same time, he knows very well that he must appear to possess certain virtues such as bravery, honesty, and

above all things honour and authority; for without the appearance of these he would find it impossible to live.

ULRICI: *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art.*

VI.

Mistress Ford and Mistress Page.

A certain tendency to tameness in the husbands is corrected by the briskness of the merry wives, who engross a large proportion of what cleverness falls in distribution. Still it is remarkable in a play where the distinctions of character are so sharply marked, that there is little hint of any subjective difference between the pair; and this drawback on their originality, keeps them in harmony with their sober environments. We can scarcely think of them otherwise than as dressed exactly alike, and Falstaff had some excuse for thinking that a love-letter that would suit one scarcely required variation for the other.

The Windsor wives are merry, and at times free spoken enough, but this is only when they "laugh alone," for the audience counts for nothing, and that some liberality in phrase is no impeachment of their honesty is the very point that protects them from the dulness of demure propriety, which would so easily lose them the sympathy of a theatrical audience, which has little tolerance for the most respectable virtue when it ignores the humanity of liveliness and animal spirits. And this is the very moral that the sober-sided Ford, who could so little understand his wife's love of her lively neighbour's company, or the feminine necessity for change of scene and lively diversion, has to learn for his own advantage, and the advantage and amusement of lookers on.

LLOYD: *Critical Essays on the Plays of Shakespeare.*

VII.

Ford and Page.

That jealous-pate, Ford, ought to have been sure of his wife's integrity and goodness, from her being so transparent-charactered and cheerful; for your insincere and double-dealing people are sure to betray, some time or other, the drag that dishonesty claps upon the wheel of their conduct. The career of a deceitful person is never uniform. In the sequel, however, Ford does make a handsome atonement—that of a frank apology to the party whom he had abused by his suspicions; and he winds up the play with the rest, not the least happy of the group from having an enfranchised heart. He says well:

> "Pardon me, wife. Henceforth do what thou wilt.
> I rather will suspect the sun with cold
> Than thee with wantonness. Now doth thy honour stand,
> In him that was of late a heretic,
> As firm as faith." . . . .

Then, there is Page, the very personification of hearty English hospitality. You feel the tight grasp of his hand, and see the honest sparkle of his eye, as he leads in the wranglers with, "Come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness." If I were required to point to the portrait of a genuine, indigenous Englishman, throughout the whole of the works of Shakespeare, Page would be the man. Every thought of his heart, every motion of his body, appears to be the result of pure instinct; he has nothing exotic or artificial about him. He possesses strong yeoman sense, an unmistakable speech, a trusting nature, and a fearless deportment; and these are the characteristics of a true Englishman. He is to be gulled —no man more so; and he is gulled every day in the year—no proof, you will say, of his "strong yeoman sense"; but an Englishman is quite as frequently gulled

with his eyes open as when they are hoodwinked. He has a conceit in being indifferent to chicanery. He confides in his own strength when it behooves him to exert it; and then he abates the nuisance.

CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE: *Shakespeare Characters.*

VIII.

Slender.

After Falstaff there is not a greater piece of work in the play than Master Abraham Slender, cousin to Robert Shallow Esquire,—a dainty sprout, or rather sapling, of provincial gentry, who, once seen, is never to be forgotten. In his consequential verdancy, his aristocratic official boobyism, and his lean-witted, lack-brain originality, this pithless hereditary squireling is altogether inimitable, whose manners and character must needs be all from within, because he lacks force of nature enough to shape or dress himself by any model. Mr. Hallam, whose judgement in such things is not often at fault, thinks Slender was intended as "a satire on the brilliant youth of the provinces," such as they were "before the introduction of newspapers and turnpike roads; awkward and boobyish among civil people, but at home in rude sports, and proud of exploits at which the town would laugh, yet perhaps with more courage and good-nature than the laughers."

HUDSON: *The Works of Shakespeare.*

IX.

Mistress Quickly.

Although a "subordinate character," how very important a person in this play is Mistress Quickly, the housekeeper to Doctor Caius; or, as Sir Hugh designates her,

"his nurse, or his dry-nurse, or his cook, or his laundry, his washer, or his wringer!" What a perfect specimen she is of a fussy, busy-bodying old woman! "That foolish carrion, Mrs. Quickly," as Mrs. Page calls her; making herself necessary to all, by reason of her fussiness; and conspicuous, by reason of her folly. A large family—the race of the Quicklies! Our Mrs. Quickly, the type of the whole breed, meddles and "trepots" in every one's affairs: with the seriousness and sincere dealing of a diplomatist, she acts the go-between for Falstaff with the two merry wives; she courts Anne Page for her master, undertaking the same office for Slender. She favours the suit of Fenton; and if the Welsh parson had turned an eye of favour upon the yeoman's pretty daughter, she would have played the hymeneal Hebe to him too. Her whole character for mere busy-bodying, and not from any active kindness of heart—for they who are sweet to all alike have no principle worth a button—her whole character is comprised in that one little speech in the 4th scene of the 3d act, when Fenton gives her the ring for his "sweet Nan." After he has gone out, she says:

"Now heaven send thee good fortune! [She would have uttered the same benediction for Slender.] A kind heart he hath; a woman would run through fire and water for such a kind heart. But yet, I would my master had Mistress Anne; or I would Master Slender had her; or, in sooth, I would Master Fenton had her. I will do what I can for them all three: for so I have promised, and I will be as good as my word; but speciously for Master Fenton."

He was the last applicant to, and had paid her.
CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE: *Shakespeare Characters.*

X.

"Sweet Anne Page."

Anne Page is but an average specimen of discreet, placid, innocent mediocrity, yet with a mind of her own,

in whom we can feel no such interest as a rich father causes to be felt by those about her. In her and Fenton a slight dash of romance is given to the play; their love forming a barely audible undertone of poetry in the grand chorus of comicalities, as if on purpose that while the sides are shaken the heart may not be left altogether untouched.

HUDSON: *The Works of Shakespeare.*

We do not wish Anne Page to have been married to Slender, but in their poetical alliance they are inseparable. . . . With regard to the under-plot of Fenton and Anne Page—the scheme of Page to marry her to Slender—the counter-plot of her mother, "firm for Doctor Caius"—and the management of the lovers to obtain a triumph out of the devices against them—it may be sufficient to point out how skilfully it is interwoven with the Herne's Oak adventure of Falstaff. Though Slender "went to her in white, and cried mum, and she cried budget, . . . yet it was not Anne, but a postmaster's boy"; though Caius did "take her in green," he "ha' married *un garçon*, a boy, *un paisan*"; but Anne and Fenton—

"long since contracted,
Are now so sure, that nothing can dissolve *them*."

KNIGHT: *Pictorial Shakspere.*

THE
Merry Wives of Windsor.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

Sir John Falstaff.
Fenton, *a gentleman.*
Shallow, *a country justice.*
Slender, *cousin to Shallow.*
Ford, Page, } *two gentlemen dwelling at Windsor.*
William Page, *a boy, son to Page.*
Sir Hugh Evans, *a Welsh parson.*
Doctor Caius, *a French physician.*
Host of the Garter Inn.
Bardolph, Pistol, Nym, } *sharpers attending on Falstaff.*
Robin, *page to Falstaff.*
Simple, *servant to Slender.*
Rugby, *servant to Doctor Caius.*

Mistress Ford.
Mistress Page.
Anne Page, *her daughter.*
Mistress Quickly, *servant to Doctor Caius.*

Servants to Page, Ford, etc.

Scene: *Windsor and the neighbourhood.*

THE
Merry Wives of Windsor.

ACT FIRST.

Scene I.

Windsor. Before Page's House.

Enter Justice Shallow, Slender, and Sir Hugh Evans.

Shal. Sir Hugh, persuade me not; I will make a Star-chamber matter of it: if he were twenty Sir John Falstaffs, he shall not abuse Robert Shallow, esquire.

Slen. In the county of Gloucester, justice of peace and 'Coram.'

Shal. Ay, cousin Slender, and 'Custalorum.'

Slen. Ay, and 'Rato-lorum' too; and a gentleman born, master parson; who writes himself 'Armigero,' in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation, 'Armigero.'

Shal. Ay, that I do; and have done any time these three hundred years.

Slen. All his successors gone before him hath done't; and all his ancestors that come after him may: they may give the dozen white luces in their coat.

Shal. It is an old coat.

Evans. The dozen white louses do become an old

coat well; it agrees well, passant; it is a familiar beast to man, and signifies love.

Shal. The luce is the fresh fish; the salt fish is an old coat.

Slen. I may quarter, coz.

Shal. You may, by marrying.

Evans. It is marring indeed, if he quarter it.

Shal. Not a whit.

Evans. Yes, py 'r lady; if he has a quarter of your coat, there is but three skirts for yourself, in my simple conjectures: but that is all one. If Sir John Falstaff have committed disparagements unto you, I am of the church, and will be glad to do my benevolence to make atonements and compremises between you.

Shal. The council shall hear it; it is a riot.

Evans. It is not meet the council hear a riot; there is no fear of Got in a riot: the council, look you, shall desire to hear the fear of Got, and not to hear a riot; take your vizaments in that.

Shal. Ha! o' my life, if I were young again, the sword should end it.

Evans. It is petter that friends is the sword, and end it: and there is also another device in my prain, which peradventure prings goot discretions with it:—there is Anne Page, which is daughter to Master George Page, which is pretty virginity.

Slen. Mistress Anne Page? She has brown hair, and speaks small like a woman.

Evans. It is that fery person for all the orld, as just as you will desire; and seven hundred pounds

of moneys, and gold and silver, is her grandsire upon his death's-bed (Got deliver to a joyful resurrections!) give, when she is able to overtake seventeen years old: it were a goot motion if we leave our pribbles and prabbles, and desire a marriage between Master Abraham and Mistress Anne Page.

Slen. Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound?

Evans. Ay, and her father is make her a petter penny.

Slen. I know the young gentlewoman; she has good gifts.

Evans. Seven hundred pounds and possibilities is goot gifts.

Shal. Well, let us see honest Master Page. Is Falstaff there?

Evans. Shall I tell you a lie? I do despise a liar as I do despise one that is false, or as I despise one that is not true. The knight, Sir John, is there; and, I beseech you, be ruled by your well-willers. I will peat the door for Master Page. [*Knocks*] What, hoa! Got pless your house here!

Page. [*Within*] Who 's there?

Enter Page.

Evans. Here is Got's plessing, and your friend, and Justice Shallow; and here young Master Slender, that peradventures shall tell you another tale, if matters grow to your likings.

Page. I am glad to see your worships well. I thank you for my venison, Master Shallow.

Shal. Master Page, I am glad to see you: much good do it your good heart! I wished your venison better; it was ill killed. How doth good Mistress Page?—and I thank you always with my heart, la! with my heart.

Page. Sir, I thank you.

Shal. Sir, I thank you; by yea and no, I do.

Page. I am glad to see you, good Master Slender.

Slen. How does your fallow greyhound, sir? I heard say he was outrun on Cotsall.

Page. It could not be judged, sir.

Slen. You 'll not confess, you 'll not confess.

Shal. That he will not. 'Tis your fault, 'tis your fault; 'tis a good dog.

Page. A cur, sir.

Shal. Sir, he 's a good dog, and a fair dog: can there be more said? he is good and fair. Is Sir John Falstaff here?

Page. Sir, he is within; and I would I could do a good office between you.

Evans. It is spoke as a Christians ought to speak.

Shal. He hath wronged me, Master Page.

Page. Sir, he doth in some sort confess it.

Shal. If it be confessed, it is not redressed: is not that so, Master Page? He hath wronged me; indeed he hath; at a word, he hath, believe me: Robert Shallow, esquire, saith, he is wronged.

Page. Here comes Sir John.

Enter Sir John Falstaff, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol.

Fal. Now, Master Shallow, you 'll complain of me to the king?

Shal. Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge.

Fal. But not kissed your keeper's daughter?

Shal. Tut, a pin! this shall be answered.

Fal. I will answer it straight; I have done all this. That is now answered.

Shal. The council shall know this.

Fal. 'Twere better for you if it were known in counsel: you'll be laughed at.

Evans. Pauca verba, Sir John; goot worts.

Fal. Good worts! good cabbage. Slender, I broke your head: what matter have you against me?

Slen. Marry, sir, I have matter in my head against you; and against your cony-catching rascals, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol.

Bard. You Banbury cheese!

Slen. Ay, it is no matter.

Pist. How now, Mephostophilus!

Slen. Ay, it is no matter.

Nym. Slice, I say! pauca, pauca: slice! that's my humour.

Slen. Where's Simple, my man? Can you tell, cousin?

Evans. Peace, I pray you. Now let us understand. There is three umpires in this matter, as I understand; that is, Master Page, fidelicet Master Page; and there is myself, fidelicet myself; and the three party is, lastly and finally, mine host of the Garter.

Page. We three, to hear it and end it between them.

Evans. Fery goot: I will make a prief of it in my note-book; and we will afterwards ork upon the cause with as great discreetly as we can.

Fal. Pistol!

Pist. He hears with ears.

Evans. The tevil and his tam! what phrase is this, 'He hears with ear'? why, it is affectations.

Fal. Pistol, did you pick Master Slender's purse?

Slen. Ay, by these gloves, did he, or I would I might never come in mine own great chamber again else, of seven groats in mill-sixpences, and two Edward shovel-boards, that cost me two shilling and two pence a-piece of Yead Miller, by these gloves.

Fal. Is this true, Pistol?

Evans. No; it is false, if it is a pick-purse.

Pist. Ha, thou mountain-foreigner! Sir John and master mine,
I combat challenge of this latten bilbo.
Word of denial in thy labras here!
Word of denial: froth and scum, thou liest!

Slen. By these gloves, then, 'twas he.

Nym. Be avised, sir, and pass good humours: I will say 'marry trap' with you, if you run the nuthook's humour on me; that is the very note of it.

Slen. By this hat, then, he in the red face had it; for though I cannot remember what I did when you made me drunk, yet I am not altogether an ass.

Fal. What say you, Scarlet and John?

Bard. Why, sir, for my part, I say the gentleman had drunk himself out of his five sentences.

Evans. It is his five senses: fie, what the ignorance is!

Bard. And being fap, sir, was, as they say, cashiered; and so conclusions passed the careires.

Slen. Ay, you spake in Latin then too; but 'tis no matter: I 'll ne'er be drunk whilst I live again, but in honest, civil, godly company, for this trick: if I be drunk, I 'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves.

Evans. So Got udge me, that is a virtuous mind.

Fal. You hear all these matters denied, gentlemen; you hear it.

Enter Anne Page, with wine; Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, following.

Page. Nay, daughter, carry the wine in; we 'll drink within. [*Exit Anne Page.*

Slen. O heaven! this is Mistress Anne Page.

Page. How now, Mistress Ford!

Fal. Mistress Ford, by my troth, you are very well met: by your leave, good mistress. [*Kisses her.*

Page. Wife, bid these gentlemen welcome. Come, we have a hot venison pasty to dinner: come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness. [*Exeunt all except Shal., Slen., and Evans.*

Slen. I had rather than forty shillings I had my Book of Songs and Sonnets here.

Enter Simple.

How now, Simple! where have you been? I must wait on myself, must I? You have not the Book of Riddles about you, have you?

Sim. Book of Riddles! why, did you not lend it to

Alice Shortcake upon All-hallowmas last, a fortnight afore Michaelmas?

Shal. Come, coz; come, coz; we stay for you. A word with you, coz; marry, this, coz: there is, as 'twere, a tender, a kind of tender, made afar off by Sir Hugh here. Do you understand me?

Slen. Ay, sir, you shall find me reasonable; if it be so, I shall do that that is reason.

Shal. Nay, but understand me.

Slen. So I do, sir.

Evans. Give ear to his motions, Master Slender: I will description the matter to you, if you be capacity of it.

Slen. Nay, I will do as my cousin Shallow says: I pray you, pardon me; he 's a justice of peace in his country, simple though I stand here.

Evans. But that is not the question: the question is concerning your marriage.

Shal. Ay, there 's the point, sir.

Evans. Marry, is it; the very point of it; to Mistress Anne Page.

Slen. Why, if it be so, I will marry her upon any reasonable demands.

Evans. But can you affection the 'oman? Let us command to know that of your mouth or of your lips; for divers philosophers hold that the lips is parcel of the mouth. Therefore, precisely, can you carry your good will to the maid?

Shal. Cousin Abraham Slender, can you love her?

Slen. I hope, sir, I will do as it shall become one that would do reason.

Evans. Nay, Got's lords and his ladies! you must speak possitable, if you can carry her your desires towards her.

Shal. That you must. Will you, upon good dowry, marry her?

Slen. I will do a greater thing than that, upon your request, cousin, in any reason.

Shal. Nay, conceive me, conceive me, sweet coz: what I do is to pleasure you, coz. Can you love the maid?

Slen. I will marry her, sir, at your request: but if there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it upon better acquaintance, when we are married and have more occasion to know one another; I hope, upon familiarity will grow more contempt: but if you say 'Marry her,' I will marry her; that I am freely dissolved, and dissolutely.

Evans. It is a fery discretion answer; save the fall is in the ort 'dissolutely': the ort is, according to our meaning, 'resolutely': his meaning is good.

Shal. Ay, I think my cousin meant well.

Slen. Ay, or else I would I might be hanged, la!

Shal. Here comes fair Mistress Anne.

Re-enter Anne Page.

Would I were young for your sake, Mistress Anne!

Anne. The dinner is on the table; my father desires your worships' company.

Shal. I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne.

Evans. Od's plessed will! I will not be absence at the grace. [*Exeunt Shallow and Evans.*

Anne. Will 't please your worship to come in, sir?

Slen. No, I thank you, forsooth, heartily; I am very well.

Anne. The dinner attends you, sir.

Slen. I am not a-hungry, I thank you, forsooth. Go, sirrah, for all you are my man, go wait upon my cousin Shallow. [*Exit Simple.*] A justice of peace sometime may be beholding to his friend for a man. I keep but three men and a boy yet, till my mother be dead: but what though? yet I live like a poor gentleman born.

Anne. I may not go in without your worship: they will not sit till you come.

Slen. I' faith, I 'll eat nothing; I thank you as much as though I did.

Anne. I pray you, sir, walk in.

Slen. I had rather walk here, I thank you. I bruised my shin th' other day with playing at sword and dagger with a master of fence: three veneys for a dish of stewed prunes; and, by my troth, I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since. Why do your dogs bark so? be there bears i' the town?

Anne. I think there are, sir; I heard them talked of.

Slen. I love the sport well; but I shall as soon quarrel at it as any man in England. You are afraid, if you see the bear loose, are you not?

Anne. Ay, indeed, sir.

Slen. That 's meat and drink to me, now. I have seen Sackerson loose twenty times, and have

taken him by the chain; but, I warrant you, the women have so cried and shrieked at it, that it passed: but women, indeed, cannot abide 'em; they are very ill-favoured rough things.

Re-enter Page.

Page. Come, gentle Master Slender, come; we stay for you.

Slen. I'll eat nothing, I thank you, sir.

Page. By cock and pie, you shall not choose, sir! come, come.

Slen. Nay, pray you, lead the way.

Page. Come on, sir.

Slen. Mistress Anne, yourself shall go first.

Anne. Not I, sir; pray you, keep on.

Slen. Truly, I will not go first; truly, la! I will not do you that wrong.

Anne. I pray you, sir.

Slen. I'll rather be unmannerly than troublesome. You do yourself wrong, indeed, la! [*Exeunt.*

Scene II.

The same.

Enter Sir Hugh Evans and Simple.

Evans. Go your ways, and ask of Doctor Caius' house which is the way: and there dwells one Mistress Quickly, which is in the manner of his nurse, or his dry nurse, or his cook, or his laundry, his washer, and his wringer.

Sim. Well, sir.

Evans. Nay, it is petter yet. Give her this letter;

for it is a 'oman that altogether's acquaintance with Mistress Anne Page: and the letter is, to desire and require her to solicit your master's desires to Mistress Anne Page. I pray you, be gone: I will make an end of my dinner; there's pippins and cheese to come. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III.

A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter Falstaff, Host, Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, and Robin.

Fal. Mine host of the Garter!

Host. What says my bully-rook? speak scholarly and wisely.

Fal. Truly, mine host, I must turn away some of my followers.

Host. Discard, bully Hercules; cashier: let them wag; trot, trot.

Fal. I sit at ten pounds a week.

Host. Thou'rt an emperor, Cæsar, Keisar, and Pheezar. I will entertain Bardolph; he shall draw, he shall tap: said I well, bully Hector?

Fal. Do so, good mine host.

Host. I have spoke; let him follow. [*To Bard.*] Let me see thee froth and lime: I am at a word; follow. [*Exit.*

Fal. Bardolph, follow him. A tapster is a good trade: an old cloak makes a new jerkin; a withered serving-man a fresh tapster. Go; adieu.

Bard. It is a life that I have desired: I will thrive.

Pist. O base Hungarian wight! wilt thou the spigot wield? [*Exit Bardolph.*

Nym. He was gotten in drink: is not the humour conceited?

Fal. I am glad I am so acquit of this tinder-box: his thefts were too open; his filching was like an unskilful singer; he kept not time.

Nym. The good humour is to steal at a minute's rest.

Pist. 'Convey,' the wise it call. 'Steal!' foh! a fico for the phrase!

Fal. Well, sirs, I am almost out at heels.

Pist. Why, then, let kibes ensue.

Fal. There is no remedy; I must cony-catch; I must shift.

Pist. Young ravens must have food.

Fal. Which of you know Ford of this town?

Pist. I ken the wight: he is of substance good.

Fal. My honest lads, I will tell you what I am about.

Pist. Two yards, and more.

Fal. No quips now, Pistol! Indeed, I am in the waist two yards about; but I am now about no waste; I am about thrift. Briefly, I do mean to make love to Ford's wife: I spy entertainment in her; she discourses, she carves, she gives the leer of invitation: I can construe the action of her familiar style; and the hardest voice of her behaviour, to be Englished rightly, is, 'I am Sir John Falstaff's.'

Pist. He hath studied her well, and translated her will, out of honesty into English.

Nym. The anchor is deep: will that humour pass?

Fal. Now, the report goes she has all the rule of her husband's purse: he hath a legion of angels.

Pist. As many devils entertain; and 'To her, boy,' say I.

Nym. The humour rises; it is good: humour me the angels.

Fal. I have writ me here a letter to her: and here another to Page's wife, who even now gave me good eyes too, examined my parts with most judicious œillades; sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly.

Pist. Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

Nym. I thank thee for that humour.

Fal. O, she did so course o'er my exteriors with such a greedy intention, that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning-glass! Here 's another letter to her: she bears the purse too; she is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty. I will be cheaters to them both, and they shall be exchequers to me; they shall be my East and West Indies, and I will trade to them both. Go bear thou this letter to Mistress Page; and thou this to Mistress Ford: we will thrive, lads, we will thrive.

Pist. Shall I Sir Pandarus of Troy become,
And by my side wear steel? then, Lucifer take all!

Nym. I will run no base humour: here, take the humour-letter: I will keep the haviour of reputation.

Fal. [*To Robin*] Hold, sirrah, bear you these letters tightly;
Sail like my pinnace to these golden shores.
Rogues, hence, avaunt! vanish like hailstones, go;
Trudge, plod away o' the hoof; seek shelter, pack!
Falstaff will learn the humour of the age,
French thrift, you rogues; myself and skirted page.

[*Exeunt Falstaff and Robin.*

Pist. Let vultures gripe thy guts! for gourd and fullam holds,
And high and low beguiles the rich and poor:
Tester I 'll have in pouch when thou shalt lack,
Base Phrygian Turk!

Nym. I have operations which be humours of revenge.

Pist. Wilt thou revenge?

Nym. By welkin and her star!

Pist. With wit or steel?

Nym. With both the humours, I:
I will discuss the humour of this love to Page.

Pist. And I to Ford shall eke unfold
How Falstaff, varlet vile,
His dove will prove, his gold will hold,
And his soft couch defile.

Nym. My humour shall not cool: I will incense Page to deal with poison; I will possess him with yellowness, for the revolt of mine is dangerous: that is my true humour.

Pist. Thou art the Mars of malecontents: I second thee; troop on. [*Exeunt.*

Scene IV.

A room in Doctor Caius's house.

Enter Mistress Quickly, Simple, and Rugby.

Quick. What, John Rugby! I pray thee, go to the casement, and see if you can see my master, Master Doctor Caius, coming. If he do, i' faith, and find anybody in the house, here will be an old abusing of God's patience and the king's English.

Rug. I 'll go watch.

Quick. Go; and we 'll have a posset for 't soon at night, in faith, at the latter end of a sea-coal fire. [*Exit Rugby.*] An honest, willing, kind fellow, as ever servant shall come in house withal; and, I warrant you, no tell-tale nor no breed-bate: his worst fault is, that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish that way: but nobody but has his fault; but let that pass. Peter Simple, you say your name is?

Sim. Ay, for fault of a better.

Quick. And Master Slender 's your master?

Sim. Ay, forsooth.

Quick. Does he not wear a great round beard, like a glover's paring-knife?

Sim. No, forsooth: he hath but a little wee face, with a little yellow beard,—a Cain-coloured beard.

Quick. A softly-sprighted man, is he not?

Sim. Ay, forsooth: but he is as tall a man of his hands as any is between this and his head; he hath fought with a warrener.

Quick. How say you?—O, I should remember him: does he not hold up his head, as it were, and strut in his gait?

Sim. Yes, indeed, does he.

Quick. Well, heaven send Anne Page no worse fortune! Tell Master Parson Evans I will do what I can for your master: Anne is a good girl, and I wish—

Re-enter Rugby.

Rug. Out, alas! here comes my master.

Quick. We shall all be shent. Run in here, good young man; go into this closet: he will not stay long. [*Shuts Simple in the closet.*] What, John Rugby! John! what, John, I say! Go, John, go inquire for my master; I doubt he be not well, that he comes not home.

[*Singing*] And down, down, adown-a, etc.

Enter Doctor Caius.

Caius. Vat is you sing? I do not like des toys. Pray you, go and vetch me in my closet un boitier vert,—a box, a green-a box: do intend vat I speak? a green-a box.

Quick. Ay, forsooth; I 'll fetch it you. [*Aside*] I am glad he went not in himself: if he had found the young man, he would have been horn-mad.

Caius. Fe, fe, fe, fe! ma foi, il fait fort chaud. Je m'en vais à la cour,—la grande affaire.

Quick. Is it this, sir?

Caius. Oui; mette le au mon pocket: dépêche, quickly. Vere is dat knave Rugby?

Quick. What, John Rugby! John!

Rug. Here, sir!

Caius. You are John Rugby, and you are Jack Rugby. Come, take-a your rapier, and come after my heel to the court.

Rug. 'Tis ready, sir, here in the porch.

Caius. By my trot, I tarry too long. Od's me! Qu'ai-j'oublié! dere is some simples in my closet, dat I vill not for the varld I shall leave behind.

Quick. Ay me, he 'll find the young man there, and be mad!

Caius. O diable, diable! vat is in my closet? Villain! larron! [*Pulling Simple out.*] Rugby, my rapier!

Quick. Good master, be content.

Caius. Wherefore shall I be content-a?

Quick. The young man is an honest man.

Caius. What shall de honest man do in my closet? dere is no honest man dat shall come in my closet.

Quick. I beseech you, be not so phlegmatic. Hear the truth of it: he came of an errand to me from Parson Hugh.

Caius. Vell.

Sim. Ay, forsooth; to desire her to—

Quick. Peace, I pray you.

Caius. Peace-a your tongue. Speak-a your tale.

Sim. To desire this honest gentlewoman, your maid, to speak a good word to Mistress Anne Page for my master in the way of marriage.

Quick. This is all, indeed, la! but I 'll ne'er put my finger in the fire, and need not.

Caius. Sir Hugh send-a you? Rugby, baille me some paper. Tarry you a little-a while. [*Writes.*

Quick. [*Aside to Simple*] I am glad he is so quiet: if he had been thoroughly moved, you should have heard him so loud and so melancholy. But notwithstanding, man, I'll do you your master what good I can: and the very yea and the no is, the French doctor, my master,—I may call him my master, look you, for I keep his house; and I wash, wring, brew, bake, scour, dress meat and drink, make the beds, and do all myself,—

Sim. [*Aside to Quickly*] 'Tis a great charge to come under one body's hand.

Quick. [*Aside to Simple*] Are you avised o' that? you shall find it a great charge: and to be up early and down late;—but notwithstanding,—to tell you in your ear; I would have no words of it,—my master himself is in love with Mistress Anne Page: but notwithstanding that, I know Anne's mind,—that's neither here nor there.

Caius. You jack'nape, give-a this letter to Sir Hugh; by gar, it is a shallenge: I will cut his troat in de park; and I will teach a scurvy jack-a-nape priest to meddle or make. You may be gone; it is not good you tarry here.—By gar, I will cut all his two stones; by gar, he shall not have a stone to throw at his dog. [*Exit Simple.*

Quick. Alas, he speaks but for his friend.

Caius. It is no matter-a ver dat:—do not you tell-a me dat I shall have Anne Page for myself?—By gar, I vill kill de Jack priest; and I have appointed mine host of de Jarteer to measure

our weapon.—By gar, I will myself have Anne Page.

Quick. Sir, the maid loves you, and all shall be well. We must give folks leave to prate: what, the good-jer!

Caius. Rugby, come to the court with me. By gar, if I have not Anne Page, I shall turn your head out of my door. Follow my heels, Rugby.

[*Exeunt Caius and Rugby.*

Quick. You shall have An fool's-head of your own. No, I know Anne's mind for that: never a woman in Windsor knows more of Anne's mind than I do; nor can do more than I do with her, I thank heaven.

Fent. [*Within*] Who 's within there? ho!

Quick. Who 's there, I trow? Come near the house, I pray you.

Enter Fenton.

Fent. How now, good woman! how dost thou?

Quick. The better that it pleases your good worship to ask.

Fent. What news? how does pretty Mistress Anne?

Quick. In truth, sir, and she is pretty, and honest, and gentle; and one that is your friend, I can tell you that by the way; I praise heaven for it.

Fent. Shall I do any good, think'st thou? Shall I not lose my suit?

Quick. Troth, sir, all is in his hands above: but notwithstanding, Master Fenton, I 'll be sworn on a book, she loves you. Have not your worship a wart above your eye?

Fent. Yes, marry, have I; what of that?

Quick. Well, thereby hangs a tale:—good faith, it is such another Nan; but, I detest, an honest maid as ever broke bread:—we had an hour's talk of that wart.—I shall never laugh but in that maid's company!—But, indeed, she is given too much to allicholy and musing: but for you—well, go to.

Fent. Well, I shall see her to-day. Hold, there's money for thee; let me have thy voice in my behalf: if thou seest her before me, commend me.

Quick. Will I? i' faith, that we will; and I will tell your worship more of the wart the next time we have confidence; and of other wooers.

Fent. Well, farewell; I am in great haste now.

Quick. Farewell to your worship. [*Exit Fenton.*] Truly, an honest gentleman; but Anne loves him not; for I know Anne's mind as well as another does.—Out upon 't! what have I forgot?

[*Exit.*

ACT SECOND.

Scene I.

Before Page's house.

Enter Mistress Page, with a letter.

Mrs Page. What, have I 'scaped love-letters in the holiday-time of my beauty, and am I now a subject for them? Let me see. [*Reads.*

'Ask me no reason why I love you; for though Love use Reason for his physician, he

admits him not for his counsellor. You are not young, no more am I; go to, then, there's sympathy: you are merry, so am I; ha, ha! then there's more sympathy: you love sack, and so do I; would you desire better sympathy? Let it suffice thee, Mistress Page,—at the least, if the love of soldier can suffice,—that I love thee. I will not say, pity me,—'tis not a soldier-like phrase; but I say, love me. By me,

Thine own true knight,
By day or night,
Or any kind of light,
With all his might
For thee to fight.—JOHN FALSTAFF.'

What a Herod of Jewry is this! O wicked, wicked world! One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age to show himself a young gallant! What an unweighed behaviour hath this Flemish drunkard picked—with the devil's name!—out of my conversation, that he dares in this manner assay me? Why, he hath not been thrice in my company! What should I say to him? I was then frugal of my mirth: Heaven forgive me! Why, I'll exhibit a bill in the parliament for the putting down of men. How shall I be revenged on him? for revenged I will be, as sure as his guts are made of puddings.

Enter Mistress Ford.

Mrs Ford. Mrs Page! trust me, I was going to your house.

Mrs Page. And, trust me, I was coming to you. You look very ill.

Mrs Ford. Nay, I 'll ne'er believe that; I have to show to the contrary.

Mrs Page. Faith, but you do, in my mind.

Mrs Ford. Well, I do, then; yet, I say, I could show you to the contrary. O Mistress Page, give me some counsel!

Mrs Page. What 's the matter, woman?

Mrs Ford. O woman, if it were not for one trifling respect, I could come to such honour!

Mrs Page. Hang the trifle, woman! take the honour. What is it?—dispense with trifles;—what is it?

Mrs Ford. If I would but go to hell for an eternal moment or so, I could be knighted.

Mrs Page. What? thou liest! Sir Alice Ford! These knights will hack; and so thou shouldst not alter the article of thy gentry.

Mrs Ford. We burn daylight:—here, read, read; perceive how I might be knighted. I shall think the worse of fat men, as long as I have an eye to make difference of men's liking: and yet he would not swear; praised woman's modesty; and gave such orderly and well-behaved reproof to all uncomeliness, that I would have sworn his disposition would have gone to the truth of his words; but they do no more adhere and keep place together than the Hundredth Psalm to the tune of 'Green Sleeves.' What tempest, I trow, threw this whale, with so many tuns of oil in his belly, ashore at Windsor? How shall I be revenged on him? I think the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked

fire of lust have melted him in his own grease. Did you ever hear the like?

Mrs Page. Letter for letter, but that the name of Page and Ford differs! To thy great comfort in this mystery of ill opinions, here 's the twin-brother of thy letter: but let thine inherit first; for, I protest, mine never shall. I warrant he hath a thousand of these letters, writ with blank space for different names,—sure, more,—and these are of the second edition: he will print them, out of doubt; for he cares not what he puts into the press, when he would put us two. I had rather be a giantess, and lie under Mount Pelion. Well, I will find you twenty lascivious turtles ere one chaste man.

Mrs Ford. Why, this is the very same; the very hand, the very words. What doth he think of us?

Mrs Page. Nay, I know not: it makes me almost ready to wrangle with mine own honesty. I 'll entertain myself like one that I am not acquainted withal; for, sure, unless he know some strain in me, that I know not myself, he would never have boarded me in this fury.

Mrs Ford. 'Boarding,' call you it? I 'll be sure to keep him above deck.

Mrs Page. So will I: if he come under my hatches, I 'll never to sea again. Let 's be revenged on him: let 's appoint him a meeting; give him a show of comfort in his suit, and lead him on with a fine-baited delay, till he hath pawned his horses to mine host of the Garter.

Mrs Ford. Nay, I will consent to act any villany against him, that may not sully the chariness of our honesty. O, that my husband saw this letter! it would give eternal food to his jealousy.

Mrs Page. Why, look where he comes; and my good man too: he's as far from jealousy as I am from giving him cause; and that, I hope, is an unmeasurable distance.

Mrs Ford. You are the happier woman.

Mrs Page. Let's consult together against this greasy knight. Come hither. [*They retire.*

Enter Ford, with Pistol, and Page, with Nym.

Ford. Well, I hope it be not so.

Pist. Hope is a curtal dog in some affairs:
Sir John affects thy wife.

Ford. Why, sir, my wife is not young.

Pist. He wooes both high and low, both rich and poor,
Both young and old, one with another, Ford;
He loves the gallimaufry: Ford, perpend.

Ford. Love my wife!

Pist. With liver burning hot. Prevent, or go thou,
Like Sir Actæon he, with Ringwood at thy heels:
O, odious is the name!

Ford. What name, sir?

Pist. The horn, I say. Farewell.
Take heed; have open eye; for thieves do foot by night:
Take heed, ere summer comes, or cuckoo-birds do sing.
Away, Sir Corporal Nym!—
Believe it, Page; he speaks sense. [*Exit.*

Ford. [*Aside*] I will be patient; I will find out this.

Nym. [*To Page*] And this is true; I like not the humour of lying. He hath wronged me in some humours: I should have borne the humoured letter to her; but I have a sword, and it shall bite upon my necessity. He loves your wife; there's the short and the long. My name is Corporal Nym; I speak, and I avouch; 'tis true: my name is Nym, and Falstaff loves your wife. Adieu. I love not the humour of bread and cheese; and there's the humour of it. Adieu. [*Exit.*

Page. 'The humour of it,' quoth 'a! here's a fellow frights English out of his wits.

Ford. I will seek out Falstaff.

Page. I never heard such a drawling, affecting rogue.

Ford. If I do find it:—well.

Page. I will not believe such a Cataian, though the priest o' the town commended him for a true man.

Ford. 'Twas a good sensible fellow;—well.

Page. How now, Meg!

[*Mrs Page and Mrs Ford come forward.*

Mrs Page. Whither go you, George? Hark you.

Mrs Ford. How now, sweet Frank! why art thou melancholy?

Ford. I melancholy! I am not melancholy. Get you home, go.

Mrs Ford. Faith, thou hast some crotchets in thy head. Now, will you go, Mrs Page?

Mrs Page. Have with you. You 'll come to dinner, George? [*Aside to Mrs Ford*] Look who

comes yonder: she shall be our messenger to this paltry knight.

Mrs Ford. [*Aside to Mrs Page*] Trust me, I thought on her: she 'll fit it.

Enter Mistress Quickly.

Mrs Page. You are come to see my daughter Anne?

Quick. Ay, forsooth; and, I pray, how does good Mistress Anne?

Mrs Page. Go in with us and see: we have an hour's talk with you.

[*Exeunt Mrs Page, Mrs Ford, and Mrs Quickly.*

Page. How now, Master Ford!

Ford. You heard what this knave told me, did you not?

Page. Yes: and you heard what the other told me?

Ford. Do you think there is truth in them?

Page. Hang 'em, slaves! I do not think the knight would offer it: but these that accuse him in his intent towards our wives are a yoke of his discarded men; very rogues, now they be out of service.

Ford. Were they his men?

Page. Marry, were they.

Ford. I like it never the better for that. Does he lie at the Garter?

Page. Ay, marry, does he. If he should intend this voyage toward my wife, I would turn her loose to him; and what he gets more of her than sharp words, let it lie on my head.

Ford. I do not misdoubt my wife; but I would be

loath to turn them together. A man may be too confident: I would have nothing lie on my head: I cannot be thus satisfied.

Page. Look where my ranting host of the Garter comes: there is either liquor in his pate, or money in his purse, when he looks so merrily.

Enter Host.

How now, mine host!

Host. How now, bully-rook! thou 'rt a gentleman. Cavaleiro-justice, I say!

Enter Shallow.

Shal. I follow, mine host, I follow. Good even and twenty, good Master Page! Master Page, will you go with us? we have sport in hand.

Host. Tell him, cavaleiro-justice; tell him, bully-rook.

Shal. Sir, there is a fray to be fought between Sir Hugh the Welsh priest and Caius the French doctor.

Ford. Good mine host o' the Garter, a word with you. [*Drawing him aside.*

Host. What say'st thou, my bully-rook?

Shal. [*To Page*] Will you go with us to behold it? My merry host hath had the measuring of their weapons; and, I think, hath appointed them contrary places; for, believe me, I hear the parson is no jester. Hark, I will tell you what our sport shall be. [*They converse apart.*

Host. Hast thou no suit against my knight, my guest-cavaleire?

Ford. None, I protest: but I 'll give you a pottle of burnt sack to give me recourse to him, and tell him my name is Brook; only for a jest.

Host. My hand, bully; thou shalt have egress and regress;—said I well?—and thy name shall be Brook. It is a merry night. Will you go, min-heers?

Shal. Have with you, mine host.

Page. I have heard the Frenchman hath good skill in his rapier.

Shal. Tut, sir, I could have told you more. In these times you stand on distance, your passes, stoccadoes, and I know not what; 'tis the heart, Master Page; 'tis here, 'tis here. I have seen the time, with my long sword I would have made you four tall fellows skip like rats.

Host. Here, boys, here, here! shall we wag?

Page. Have with you. I had rather hear them scold than fight. [*Exeunt Host, Shal., and Page.*

Ford. Though Page be a secure fool, and stands so firmly on his wife's frailty, yet I cannot put off my opinion so easily: she was in his company at Page's house; and what they made there I know not. Well, I will look further into 't: and I have a disguise to sound Falstaff. If I find her honest, I lose not my labour; if she be otherwise, 'tis labour well bestowed. [*Exit.*

Scene II.

A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter Falstaff and Pistol.

Fal. I will not lend thee a penny.

Pist. Why, then the world 's mine oyster,
Which I with sword will open.

Fal. Not a penny. I have been content, sir, you should lay my countenance to pawn: I have grated upon my good friends for three reprieves for you and your coach-fellow Nym; or else you had looked through the grate, like a geminy of baboons. I am damned in hell for swearing to gentlemen my friends, you were good soldiers and tall fellows; and when Mistress Bridget lost the handle of her fan, I took 't upon mine honour thou hadst it not.

Pist. Didst not thou share? hadst thou not fifteen pence?

Fal. Reason, you rogue, reason: think'st thou I 'll endanger my soul gratis? At a word, hang no more about me, I am no gibbet for you. Go. A short knife and a throng!—To your manor of Pickt-hatch! Go. You'll not bear a letter for me, you rogue! you stand upon your honour! Why, thou unconfinable baseness, it is as much as I can do to keep the terms of my honour precise: I, I, I myself sometimes, leaving the fear of God on the left hand, and hiding mine honour in my necessity, am fain to shuffle, to hedge, and to lurch; and yet you, rogue, will

ensconce your rags, your cat-a-mountain looks, your red-lattice phrases, and your bold-beating oaths, under the shelter of your honour! You will not do it, you!

Pist. I do relent: what would thou more of man?

Enter Robin.

Rob. Sir, here's a woman would speak with you.

Fal. Let her approach.

Enter Mistress Quickly.

Quick. Give your worship good morrow.

Fal. Good morrow, good wife.

Quick. Not so, an 't please your worship.

Fal. Good maid, then.

Quick. I 'll be sworn;
As my mother was, the first hour I was born.

Fal. I do believe the swearer. What with me?

Quick. Shall I vouchsafe your worship a word or two?

Fal. Two thousand, fair woman: and I 'll vouchsafe thee the hearing.

Quick. There is one Mistress Ford, sir:—I pray, come a little nearer this ways:—I myself dwell with Master Doctor Caius,—

Fal. Well, on: Mistress Ford, you say,—

Quick. Your worship says very true:—I pray your worship, come a little nearer this ways.

Fal. I warrant thee, nobody hears;—mine own people, mine own people.

Quick. Are they so? God bless them, and make them his servants!

Fal. Well, Mistress Ford;—what of her?

Quick. Why, sir, she 's a good creature.—Lord, Lord! your worship 's a wanton! Well, heaven forgive you and all of us, I pray!

Fal. Mistress Ford;—come, Mistress Ford,—

Quick. Marry, this is the short and the long of it; you have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis wonderful. The best courtier of them all, when the court lay at Windsor, could never have brought her to such a canary. Yet there has been knights, and lords, and gentlemen, with their coaches; I warrant you, coach after coach, letter after letter, gift after gift; smelling so sweetly, all musk, and so rushling, I warrant you, in silk and gold; and in such alligant terms; and in such wine and sugar of the best and the fairest, that would have won any woman's heart; and, I warrant you, they could never get an eye-wink of her: I had myself twenty angels given me this morning; but I defy all angels—in any such sort, as they say—but in the way of honesty: and, I warrant you, they could never get her so much as sip on a cup with the proudest of them all: and yet there has been earls, nay, which is more, pensioners; but, I warrant you, all is one with her.

Fal. But what says she to me? be brief, my good she-Mercury.

Quick. Marry, she hath received your letter; for the which she thanks you a thousand times; and she gives you to notify, that her husband will be absence from his house between ten and eleven.

Fal. Ten and eleven.

Quick. Ay, forsooth; and then you may come and see the picture, she says, that you wot of: Master Ford, her husband, will be from home. Alas, the sweet woman leads an ill life with him! he's a very jealousy man: she leads a very frampold life with him, good heart.

Fal. Ten and eleven. Woman, commend me to her; I will not fail her.

Quick. Why, you say well. But I have another messenger to your worship. Mistress Page hath her hearty commendations to you, too: and let me tell you in your ear, she 's as fartuous a civil modest wife, and one, I tell you, that will not miss you morning nor evening prayer, as any is in Windsor, whoe'er be the other: and she bade me tell your worship that her husband is seldom from home; but, she hopes, there will come a time. I never knew a woman so dote upon a man: surely, I think you have charms, la; yes, in truth.

Fal. Not I, I assure thee: setting the attraction of my good parts aside, I have no other charms.

Quick. Blessing on your heart for 't!

Fal. But, I pray thee, tell me this: has Ford's wife and Page's wife acquainted each other how they love me?

Quick. That were a jest indeed! they have not so little grace, I hope: that were a trick indeed! But Mistress Page would desire you to send her your little page, of all loves: her husband has a marvellous infection to the little page; and, truly, Master Page is an honest man.

Never a wife in Windsor leads a better life than she does: do what she will, say what she will, take all, pay all, go to bed when she list, rise when she list, all is as she will: and, truly, she deserves it; for if there be a kind woman in Windsor, she is one. You must send her your page; no remedy.

Fal. Why, I will.

Quick. Nay, but do so, then: and, look you, he may come and go between you both; and, in any case, have a nay-word, that you may know one another's mind, and the boy never need to understand any thing; for 'tis not good that children should know any wickedness: old folks, you know, have discretion, as they say, and know the world.

Fal. Fare thee well: commend me to them both: there's my purse; I am yet thy debtor. Boy, go along with this woman. [*Exeunt Mistress Quickly and Robin.*] This news distracts me!

Pist. This punk is one of Cupid's carriers:
Clap on more sails; pursue; up with your fights:
Give fire: she is my prize, or ocean whelm them all!
[*Exit.*

Fal. Say'st thou so, old Jack? go thy ways; I'll make more of thy old body than I have done. Will they yet look after thee? Wilt thou, after the expense of so much money, be now a gainer? Good body, I thank thee. Let them say 'tis grossly done; so it be fairly done, no matter.

Enter Bardolph.

Bard. Sir John, there's one Master Brook below

would fain speak with you, and be acquainted with you; and hath sent your worship a morning's draught of sack.

Fal. Brook is his name?

Bard. Ay, sir.

Fal. Call him in. [*Exit Bardolph.*] Such Brooks are welcome to me, that o'erflows such liquor. Ah, ha! Mistress Ford and Mistress Page have I encompassed you? go to; via!

Re-enter Bardolph with Ford disguised.

Ford. Bless you, sir!

Fal. And you, sir! Would you speak with me?

Ford. I make bold to press with so little preparation upon you.

Fal. You're welcome. What's your will?—Give us leave, drawer. [*Exit Bardolph.*

Ford. Sir, I am a gentleman that have spent much; my name is Brook.

Fal. Good Master Brook, I desire more acquaintance of you.

Ford. Good Sir John, I sue for yours: not to charge you; for I must let you understand I think myself in better plight for a lender than you are: the which hath something emboldened me to this unseasoned intrusion; for they say, if money go before, all ways do lie open.

Fal. Money is a good soldier, sir, and will on.

Ford. Troth, and I have a bag of money here troubles me: if you will help to bear it, Sir John, take all, or half, for easing me of the carriage.

Fal. Sir, I know not how I may deserve to be your porter.

Ford. I will tell you, sir, if you will give me the hearing.

Fal. Speak, good Master Brook: I shall be glad to be your servant.

Ford. Sir, I hear you are a scholar,—I will be brief with you,—and you have been a man long known to me, though I had never so good means, as desire, to make myself acquainted with you. I shall discover a thing to you, wherein I must very much lay open mine own imperfection: but, good Sir John, as you have one eye upon my follies, as you hear them unfolded, turn another into the register of your own; that I may pass with a reproof the easier, sith you yourself know how easy it is to be such an offender.

Fal. Very well, sir; proceed.

Ford. There is a gentlewoman in this town; her husband's name is Ford.

Fal. Well, sir.

Ford. I have long loved her, and, I protest to you, bestowed much on her; followed her with a doting observance; engrossed opportunities to meet her; fee'd every slight occasion that could but niggardly give me sight of her; not only bought many presents to give her, but have given largely to many to know what she would have given; briefly, I have pursued her as love hath pursued me; which hath been on the wing of all occasions. But whatsoever I have merited, either in my mind or in my means, meed, I am sure, I have received none; unless

experience be a jewel that I have purchased at an infinite rate, and that hath taught me to say this:

'Love like a shadow flies when substance love pursues;
Pursuing that that flies, and flying what pursues.'

Fal. Have you received no promise of satisfaction at her hands?

Ford. Never.

Fal. Have you importuned her to such a purpose?

Ford. Never.

Fal. Of what quality was your love, then?

Ford. Like a fair house built on another man's ground; so that I have lost my edifice by mistaking the place where I erected it.

Fal. To what purpose have you unfolded this to me?

Ford. When I have told you that, I have told you all. Some say, that though she appear honest to me, yet in other places she enlargeth her mirth so far that there is shrewd construction made of her. Now, Sir John, here is the heart of my purpose: you are a gentleman of excellent breeding, admirable discourse, of great admittance, authentic in your place and person, generally allowed for your many war-like, court-like, and learned preparations.

Fal. O, sir!

Ford. Believe it, for you know it. There is money; spend it, spend it; spend more; spend all I have; only give me so much of your time in exchange of it, as to lay an amiable siege to the honesty of this Ford's wife: use your art of wooing; win her to consent to you: if any man may, you may as soon as any.

Fal. Would it apply well to the vehemency of your affection, that I should win what you would enjoy? Methinks you prescribe to yourself very preposterously.

Ford. O, understand my drift. She dwells so securely on the excellency of her honour, that the folly of my soul dares not present itself: she is too bright to be looked against. Now, could I come to her with any detection in my hand, my desires had instance and argument to commend themselves: I could drive her then from the ward of her purity, her reputation, her marriage-vow, and a thousand other her defences, which now are too too strongly embattled against me. What say you to 't, Sir John?

Fal. Master Brook, I will first make bold with your money; next, give me your hand; and last, as I am a gentleman, you shall, if you will, enjoy Ford's wife.

Ford. O good sir!

Fal. I say you shall.

Ford. Want no money, Sir John; you shall want none.

Fal. Want no Mistress Ford, Master Brook; you shall want none. I shall be with her, I may tell you, by her own appointment; even as you came in to me, her assistant, or go-between, parted from me: I say I shall be with her between ten and eleven; for at that time the jealous rascally knave her husband will be forth. Come you to me at night; you shall know how I speed.

Ford. I am blest in your acquaintance. Do you know Ford, sir?

Fal. Hang him, poor cuckoldly knave! I know him not:—yet I wrong him to call him poor; they say the jealous wittolly knave hath masses of money; for the which his wife seems to me well-favoured. I will use her as the key of the cuckoldly rogue's coffer; and there's my harvest-home.

Ford. I would you knew Ford, sir, that you might avoid him, if you saw him.

Fal. Hang him, mechanical salt-butter rogue! I will stare him out of his wits; I will awe him with my cudgel: it shall hang like a meteor o'er the cuckold's horns. Master Brook, thou shalt know I will predominate over the peasant, and thou shalt lie with his wife. Come to me soon at night. Ford's a knave, and I will aggravate his style; thou, Master Brook, shalt know him for knave and cuckold. Come to me soon at night. [*Exit.*

Ford. What a damned Epicurean rascal is this! My heart is ready to crack with impatience. Who says this is improvident jealousy? my wife hath sent to him; the hour is fixed; the match is made. Would any man have thought this? See the hell of having a false woman! My bed shall be abused, my coffers ransacked, my reputation gnawn at; and I shall not only receive this villanous wrong, but stand under the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that does me this wrong. Terms! names!— Amaimon sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason,

well; yet they are devils' additions, the names of fiends: but Cuckold! Wittol!—Cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name. Page is an ass, a secure ass: he will trust his wife; he will not be jealous. I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my aqua-vitæ bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling gelding, than my wife with herself: then she plots, then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they think in their hearts they may effect, they will break their hearts but they will effect. God be praised for my jealousy!—Eleven o'clock the hour. I will prevent this, detect my wife, be revenged on Falstaff, and laugh at Page. I will about it; better three hours too soon than a minute too late. Fie, fie, fie! cuckold! cuckold! cuckold! [*Exit.*

Scene III.

A field near Windsor.

Enter Caius and Rugby.

Caius. Jack Rugby!

Rug. Sir?

Caius. Vat is de clock, Jack?

Rug. 'Tis past the hour, sir, that Sir Hugh promised to meet.

Caius. By gar, he has save his soul, dat he is no come; he has pray his Pible well, dat he is no come: by gar, Jack Rugby, he is dead already, if he be come.

Rug. He is wise, sir; he knew your worship would kill him, if he came.

Caius. By gar, de herring is no dead so as I vill kill him. Take your rapier, Jack; I vill tell you how I vill kill him.

Rug. Alas, sir, I cannot fence.

Caius. Villainy, take your rapier.

Rug. Forbear; here 's company.

Enter Host, Shallow, Slender, and Page.

Host. Bless thee, bully doctor!

Shal. Save you, Master Doctor Caius!

Page. Now, good master doctor!

Slen. Give you good morrow, sir.

Caius. Vat be all you, one, two, tree, four, come for?

Host. To see thee fight, to see thee foin, to see thee traverse; to see thee here, to see thee there; to see thee pass thy punto, thy stock, thy reverse, thy distance, thy montant. Is he dead, my Ethiopian? is he dead, my Francisco? ha, bully! What says my Æsculapius? my Galen? my heart of elder? ha! is he dead, bully-stale? is he dead?

Caius. By gar, he is de coward Jack priest of de vorld; he is not show his face.

Host. Thou art a Castalion, King-Urinal. Hector of Greece, my boy!

Caius. I pray you, bear vitness that me have stay six or seven, two, tree hours for him, and he is no come.

Shal. He is the wiser man, master doctor; he is a

curer of souls, and you a curer of bodies; if you should fight, you go against the hair of your professions. Is it not true, Master Page?

Page. Master Shallow, you have yourself been a great fighter, though now a man of peace.

Shal. Bodykins, Master Page, though I now be old, and of the peace, if I see a sword out, my finger itches to make one. Though we are justices, and doctors, and churchmen, Master Page, we have some salt of our youth in us; we are the sons of women, Master Page.

Page. 'Tis true, Master Shallow.

Shal. It will be found so, Master Page. Master Doctor Caius, I am come to fetch you home. I am sworn of the peace: you have shewed yourself a wise physician, and Sir Hugh hath shewn himself a wise and patient churchman. You must go with me, master doctor.

Host. Pardon, guest-justice.—A word, Mounseur Mock-water.

Caius. Mock-vater! vat is dat?

Host. Mock-water, in our English tongue, is valour, bully.

Caius. By gar, den, I have as much mock-vater as de Englishman.—Scurvy jack-dog priest! by gar, me vill cut his ears.

Host. He will clapper-claw thee tightly, bully.

Caius. Clapper-de-claw! vat is dat?

Host. That is, he will make thee amends.

Caius. By gar, me do look he shall clapper-de-claw me; for, by gar, me vill have it.

Host. And I will provoke him to 't, or let him wag.

Caius. Me tank you for dat.

Host. And, moreover, bully,—But first, master guest, and Master Page, and eke Cavaleiro Slender, go you through the town to Frogmore. [*Aside to them.*

Page. Sir Hugh is there, is he?

Host. He is there: see what humour he is in; and I will bring the doctor about by the fields. Will it do well?

Shal. We will do it.

Page, Shal., and Slen. Adieu, good master doctor. [*Exeunt Page, Shal., and Slen.*

Caius. By gar, me vill kill de priest; for he speak for a jack-an-ape to Anne Page.

Host. Let him die: sheathe thy impatience, throw cold water on thy choler: go about the fields with me through Frogmore: I will bring thee where Mistress Anne Page is, at a farm-house a-feasting; and thou shalt woo her. Cried I aim? said I well?

Caius. By gar, me dank you vor dat: by gar, I love you; and I shall procure-a you de good guest, de earl, de knight, de lords, de gentlemen, my patients.

Host. For the which I will be thy adversary toward Anne Page. Said I well?

Caius. By gar, 'tis good; vell said.

Host. Let us wag, then.

Caius. Come at my heels, Jack Rugby. [*Exeunt.*

ACT THIRD.

Scene I.

A field near Frogmore.

Enter Sir Hugh Evans and Simple.

Evans. I pray you now, good Master Slender's serving-man, and friend Simple by your name, which way have you looked for Master Caius, that calls himself doctor of physic?

Sim. Marry, sir, the pittie-ward, the park-ward, every way: old Windsor way, and every way but the town way.

Evans. I most fehemently desire you you will also look that way.

Sim. I will, sir. [*Exit.*

Evans. Pless my soul, how full of chollors I am, and trempling of mind—I shall be glad if he have deceived me.—How melancholies I am!—I will knog his urinals about his knave's costard when I have goot opportunities for the ork.—
Pless my soul!— [*Sings.*

To shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals;
There will we make our peds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies.
To shallow—

Mercy on me! I have a great dispositions to cry. [*Sings.*

Melodious birds sing madrigals—
Whenas I sat in Pabylon—

And a thousand vagram posies.
To shallow, &c.

Re-enter Simple.

Sim. Yonder he is coming, this way, Sir Hugh.
Evans. He 's welcome.— [*Sings.*
To shallow rivers, to whose falls—
Heaven prosper the right!—What weapons is he?
Sim. No weapons, sir. There comes my master, Master Shallow, and another gentleman, from Frogmore, over the stile, this way.
Evans. Pray you, give me my gown; or else keep it in your arms.

Enter Page, Shallow, and Slender.

Shal. How now, master parson! Good morrow, good Sir Hugh. Keep a gamester from the dice, and a good student from his book, and it is wonderful.
Slen. [*Aside*] Ah, sweet Anne Page!
Page. Save you, good Sir Hugh!
Evans. Pless you from his mercy sake, all of you!
Shal. What, the sword and the word! do you study them both, master parson?
Page. And youthful still! in your doublet and hose this raw rheumatic day!
Evans. There is reasons and causes for it.
Page. We are come to you to do a good office, master parson.
Evans. Fery well: what is it?
Page. Yonder is a most reverend gentleman, who, belike having received wrong by some person,

is at most odds with his own gravity and patience that ever you saw.

Shal. I have lived fourscore years and upward; I never heard a man of his place, gravity, and learning, so wide of his own respect.

Evans. What is he?

Page. I think you know him; Master Doctor Caius, the renowned French physician.

Evans. Got's will, and his passion of my heart! I had as lief you would tell me of a mess of porridge.

Page. Why?

Evans. He has no more knowledge in Hibocrates and Galen,—and he is a knave besides; a cowardly knave as you would desires to be acquainted withal.

Page. I warrant you, he 's the man should fight with him.

Slen. [*Aside*] O sweet Anne Page!

Shal. It appears so, by his weapons. Keep them asunder: here comes Doctor Caius.

Enter Host, Caius, and Rugby.

Page. Nay, good master parson, keep in your weapon.

Shal. So do you, good master doctor.

Host. Disarm them, and let them question: let them keep their limbs whole, and hack our English.

Caius. I pray you, let-a me speak a word with your ear. Verefore vill you not meet-a me?

Evans. [*Aside to Caius*] Pray you, use your patience: in good time.

Caius. By gar, you are de coward, de Jack dog, John Ape.

Evans. [*Aside to Caius*] Pray you, let us not be laughing-stocks to other men's humours; I desire you in friendship, and I will one way or other make you amends. [*Aloud*] I will knog your urinals about your knave's cogscomb for missing your meetings and appointments.

Caius. Diable!—Jack Rugby,—mine host de Jarteer,—have I not stay for him to kill him? have I not, at de place I did appoint?

Evans. As I am a Christians soul, now, look you, this is the place appointed: I 'll be judgement by mine host of the Garter.

Host. Peace, I say, Gallia and Gaul, French and Welsh, soul-curer and body-curer!

Caius. Ay, dat is very good; excellent.

Host. Peace, I say! hear mine host of the Garter. Am I politic? am I subtle? am I a Machiavel? Shall I lose my doctor? no; he gives me the potions and the motions. Shall I lose my parson, my priest, my Sir Hugh? no; he gives me the proverbs and the no-verbs. Give me thy hand, terrestrial; so. Give me thy hand, celestial; so. Boys of art, I have deceived you both; I have directed you to wrong places: your hearts are mighty, your skins are whole, and let burnt sack be the issue. Come, lay their swords to pawn. Follow me, lads of peace; follow, follow, follow.

Shal. Trust me, a mad host. Follow, gentlemen, follow.

Slen. [*Aside*] O sweet Anne Page!

[*Exeunt Shal., Slen., Page, and Host.*

Caius. Ha, do I perceive dat? have you make-a de sot of us, ha, ha?

Evans. This is well; he has made us his vlouting-stog.—I desire you that we may be friends; and let us knog our prains together to be revenge on this same scall, scurvy, cogging companion, the host of the Garter.

Caius. By gar, with all my heart. He promise to bring me where is Anne Page; by gar, he deceive me too.

Evans. Well, I will smite his noddles. Pray you, follow. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II.

The street, in Windsor.

Enter Mistress Page and Robin.

Mrs Page. Nay, keep your way, little gallant; you were wont to be a follower, but now you are a leader. Whether had you rather lead mine eyes, or eye your master's heels?

Rob. I had rather, forsooth, go before you like a man than follow him like a dwarf.

Mrs Page. O, you are a flattering boy: now I see you 'll be a courtier.

Enter Ford.

Ford. Well met, Mistress Page. Whither go you?

Mrs. Page. Truly, sir, to see your wife. Is she at home?

Ford. Ay; and as idle as she may hang together, for want of company. I think, if your husbands were dead, you two would marry.

Mrs Page. Be sure of that,—two other husbands.

Ford. Where had you this pretty weathercock?

Mrs Page. I cannot tell what the dickens his name is my husband had him of.—What do you call your knight's name, sirrah?

Rob. Sir John Falstaff.

Ford. Sir John Falstaff!

Mrs Page. He, he; I can never hit on 's name. There is such a league between my good man and he!—Is your wife at home indeed?

Ford. Indeed she is.

Mrs Page. By your leave, sir: I am sick till I see her. [*Exeunt Mrs Page and Robin.*

Ford. Has Page any brains? hath he any eyes? hath he any thinking? Sure, they sleep; he hath no use of them. Why, this boy will carry a letter twenty mile, as easy as a cannon will shoot point-blank twelve score. He pieces out his wife's inclination; he gives her folly motion and advantage: and now she 's going to my wife, and Falstaff's boy with her. A man may hear this shower sing in the wind. And Falstaff's boy with her! Good plots, they are laid; and our revolted wives share damnation together. Well; I will take him, then torture my wife, pluck the borrowed veil of modesty from the so seeming Mistress Page, divulge Page himself for a secure and wilful Actæon; and to these violent proceedings all my neighbors shall cry aim. [*Clock heard.*] The clock gives me my cue, and my assurance bids me search: there I shall find Falstaff: I shall be rather praised for this than

mocked; for it is as positive as the earth is firm that Falstaff is there: I will go.

Enter Page, Shallow, Slender, Host, Sir Hugh Evans, Caius, and Rugby.

Shal., Page, &c. Well met, Master Ford.

Ford. Trust me, a good knot: I have good cheer at home; and I pray you all go with me.

Shal. I must excuse myself, Master Ford.

Slen. And so must I, sir: we have appointed to dine with Mistress Anne, and I would not break with her for more money than I 'll speak of.

Shal. We have lingered about a match between Anne Page and my cousin Slender, and this day we shall have our answer.

Slen. I hope I have your good will, father Page.

Page. You have, Master Slender; I stand wholly for you:—but my wife, master doctor, is for you altogether.

Caius. Ay, be-gar; and de maid is love-a me: my nursh-a Quickly tell me so mush.

Host. What say you to young Master Fenton? he capers, he dances, he has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May: he will carry 't, he will carry 't; 'tis in his buttons; he will carry 't.

Page. Not by my consent, I promise you. The gentleman is of no having: he kept company with the wild prince and Poines; he is of too high a region; he knows too much. No, he shall not knit a knot in his fortunes with the finger of my substance: if he take her, let him take her

simply; the wealth I have waits on my consent, and my consent goes not that way.

Ford. I beseech you heartily, some of you go home with me to dinner: besides your cheer, you shall have sport; I will show you a monster. Master doctor, you shall go; so shall you, Master Page; and you, Sir Hugh.

Shal. Well, fare you well: We shall have the freer wooing at Master Page's. [*Exeunt Shal. and Slen.*

Caius. Go home, John Rugby; I come anon. [*Exit Rugby.*

Host. Farewell, my hearts: I will to my honest knight Falstaff, and drink canary with him. [*Exit.*

Ford. [*Aside*] I think I shall drink in pipe-wine first with him; I 'll make him dance. Will you go, gentles?

All. Have with you to see this monster. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III.

A room in Ford's house.

Enter Mistress Ford and Mistress Page.

Mrs Ford. What, John! What, Robert!

Mrs Page. Quickly, quickly!—is the buckbasket—

Mrs Ford. I warrant. What, Robin, I say!

Enter Servants with a basket.

Mrs Page. Come, come, come.

Mrs Ford. Here, set it down.

Mrs Page. Give your men the charge; we must be brief.

Mrs Ford. Marry, as I told you before, John and

Robert, be ready here hard by in the brew-house; and when I suddenly call you, come forth, and, without any pause or staggering, take this basket on your shoulders: that done, trudge with it in all haste, and carry it among the whitsters in Datchet-mead, and there empty it in the muddy ditch close by the Thames side.

Mrs Page. You will do it?

Mrs Ford. I ha' told them over and over; they lack no direction. Be gone, and come when you are called. [*Exeunt Servants.*

Mrs Page. Here comes little Robin.

Enter Robin.

Mrs Ford. How now, my eyas-musket! what news with you?

Rob. My master, Sir John, is come in at your back-door, Mistress Ford, and requests your company.

Mrs Page. You little Jack-a-Lent, have you been true to us?

Rob. Ay, I 'll be sworn. My master knows not of your being here, and hath threatened to put me into everlasting liberty, if I tell you of it; for he swears he 'll turn me away.

Mrs Page. Thou 'rt a good boy: this secrecy of thine shall be a tailor to thee, and shall make thee a new doublet and hose. I 'll go hide me.

Mrs Ford. Do so. Go tell thy master I am alone. [*Exit Robin.*] Mistress Page, remember you your cue.

Mrs Page. I warrant thee; if I do not act it, hiss me. [*Exit.*

Mrs Ford. Go to, then: we 'll use this unwholesome humidity, this gross watery pumpion; we 'll teach him to know turtles from jays.

Enter Falstaff.

Fal. 'Have I caught' thee, 'my heavenly jewel?' Why, now let me die, for I have lived long enough: this is the period of my ambition: O this blessed hour!

Mrs Ford. O sweet Sir John!

Fal. Mistress Ford, I cannot cog, I cannot prate, Mistress Ford. Now shall I sin in my wish: I would thy husband were dead: I 'll speak it before the best lord; I would make thee my lady.

Mrs Ford. I your lady, Sir John! alas, I should be a pitiful lady!

Fal. Let the court of France show me such another. I see how thine eye would emulate the diamond: thou hast the right arched beauty of the brow that becomes the ship-tire, the tire-valiant, or any tire of Venetian admittance.

Mrs Ford. A plain kerchief, Sir John: my brows become nothing else; nor that well neither.

Fal. By the Lord, thou art a traitor to say so: thou wouldst make an absolute courtier; and the firm fixture of thy foot would give an excellent motion to thy gait in a semicircled farthingale. I see what thou wert, if Fortune thy foe were not, Nature thy friend. Come, thou canst not hide it.

Mrs Ford. Believe me, there 's no such thing in me.

Fal. What made me love thee? let that persuade thee there 's something extraordinary in thee. Come, I cannot cog, and say thou art this and that, like a many of these lisping hawthornbuds, that come like women in men's apparel, and smell like Bucklersbury in simple time; I cannot: but I love thee; none but thee; and thou deservest it.

Mrs Ford. Do not betray me, sir. I fear you love Mistress Page.

Fal. Thou mightst as well say I love to walk by the Counter-gate, which is as hateful to me as the reek of a lime-kiln.

Mrs Ford. Well, heaven knows how I love you; and you shall one day find it.

Fal. Keep in that mind; I 'll deserve it.

Mrs Ford. Nay, I must tell you, so you do; or else I could not be in that mind.

Rob. [*Within*] Mistress Ford, Mistress Ford! here 's Mistress Page at the door, sweating, and blowing, and looking wildly, and would needs speak with you presently.

Fal. She shall not see me: I will ensconce me behind the arras.

Mrs Ford. Pray you, do so: she 's a very tattling woman. [*Falstaff hides himself.*

Re-enter Mistress Page and Robin.

What 's the matter? how now!

Mrs Page. O Mistress Ford, what have you done? You 're sham'd, you 're overthrown, you 're undone for ever!

Mrs Ford. What 's the matter, good Mistress Page?

Mrs Page. O well-a-day, Mistress Ford! having an honest man to your husband, to give him such cause of suspicion!

Mrs Ford. What cause of suspicion?

Mrs Page. What cause of suspicion! Out upon you! how am I mistook in you!

Mrs Ford. Why, alas, what 's the matter?

Mrs Page. Your husband 's coming hither, woman, with all the officers in Windsor, to search for a gentleman that he says is here now in the house, by your consent, to take an ill advantage of his absence: you are undone.

Mrs Ford. 'Tis not so, I hope.

Mrs Page. Pray heaven it be not so, that you have such a man here! but 'tis most certain your husband 's coming, with half Windsor at his heels, to search for such a one. I come before to tell you. If you know yourself clear, why, I am glad of it; but if you have a friend here, convey, convey him out. Be not amazed; call all your senses to you; defend your reputation, or bid farewell to your good life for ever.

Mrs Ford. What shall I do? There is a gentleman my dear friend; and I fear not mine own shame so much as his peril: I had rather than a thousand pound he were out of the house.

Mrs Page. For shame! never stand 'you had rather' and 'you had rather': your husband 's here at hand; bethink you of some conveyance: in the house you cannot hide him. O, how have you deceived me! Look, here is a basket: if he be

of any reasonable stature, he may creep in here; and throw foul linen upon him, as if it were going to bucking: or,—it is whiting-time,—send him by your two men to Datchet-mead.

Mrs Ford. He 's too big to go in there. What shall I do?

Fal. [*Coming forward*] Let me see 't, let me see 't, O, let me see 't!—I 'll in, I 'll in.—Follow your friend's counsel.—I 'll in.

Mrs Page. What, Sir John Falstaff! Are these your letters, knight?

Fal. I love thee.—Help me away.—Let me creep in here.—I 'll never—

[*Gets into the basket; they cover him with foul linen.*

Mrs Page. Help to cover your master, boy.—Call your men, Mistress Ford.—You dissembling knight!

Mrs Ford. What, John! Robert! John! [*Exit Robin.*

Re-enter Servants.

Go take up these clothes here quickly.—Where 's the cowl-staff? look, how you drumble!—Carry them to the laundress in Datchet-mead; quickly, come.

Enter Ford, Page, Caius, and Sir Hugh Evans.

Ford. Pray you, come near: if I suspect without cause, why then make sport at me; then let me be your jest; I deserve it.—How now! whither bear you this?

Serv. To the laundress, forsooth.

Mrs Ford. Why, what have you to do whither they

bear it? You were best meddle with buck-washing.

Ford. Buck!—I would I could wash myself of the buck!—Buck, buck, buck! Ay buck; I warrant you, buck; and of the season too, it shall appear. [*Exeunt Servants with the basket.*] Gentlemen, I have dreamed to-night; I'll tell you my dream. Here, here, here be my keys: ascend my chambers; search, seek, find out: I'll warrant we'll unkennel the fox. Let me stop this way first. [*Locking the door.*] So, now uncape.

Page. Good Master Ford, be contented: you wrong yourself too much.

Ford. True, Master Page. Up, gentlemen; you shall see sport anon: follow me, gentlemen. [*Exit.*

Evans. This is fery fantastical humours and jealousies.

Caius. By gar, 'tis no the fashion of France; it is not jealous in France.

Page. Nay, follow him, gentlemen; see the issue of his search. [*Exeunt Page, Caius, and Evans.*

Mrs Page. Is there not a double excellency in this?

Mrs Ford. I know not which pleases me better, that my husband is deceived, or Sir John.

Mrs Page. What a taking was he in when your husband asked who was in the basket!

Mrs Ford. I am half afraid he will have need of washing; so throwing him into the water will do him a benefit.

Mrs Page. Hang him, dishonest rascal! I would all of the same strain were in the same distress.

Mrs Ford. I think my husband hath some special

suspicion of Falstaff's being here; for I never saw him so gross in his jealousy till now.

Mrs Page. I will lay a plot to try that; and we will yet have more tricks with Falstaff: his dissolute disease will scarce obey this medicine.

Mrs Ford. Shall we send that foolish carrion, Mistress Quickly, to him, and excuse his throwing into the water; and give him another hope, to betray him to another punishment?

Mrs Page. We will do it: let him be sent for tomorrow, eight o'clock, to have amends.

Re-enter Ford, Page, Caius, and Sir Hugh Evans.

Ford. I cannot find him: may be the knave bragged of that he could not compass.

Mrs Page. [*Aside to Mrs Ford*] Heard you that?

Mrs Ford. You use me well, Master Ford, do you?

Ford. Ay, I do so.

Mrs Ford. Heaven make you better than your thoughts!

Ford. Amen!

Mrs Page. You do yourself mighty wrong, Master Ford.

Ford. Ay, ay; I must bear it.

Evans. If there be any pody in the house, and in the chambers, and in the coffers, and in the presses, heaven forgive my sins at the day of judgement!

Caius. By gar, nor I too: there is no bodies.

Page. Fie, fie, Master Ford! are you not ashamed? What spirit, what devil suggests this imagination? I would not ha' your distemper in this kind for the wealth of Windsor Castle.

Ford. 'Tis my fault, Master Page: I suffer for it.
Evans. You suffer for a pad conscience: your wife is as honest a 'omans as I will desires among five thousand, and five hundred too.
Caius. By gar, I see 'tis an honest woman.
Ford. Well, I promised you a dinner.—Come, come, walk in the park: I pray you, pardon me; I will hereafter make known to you why I have done this.—Come, wife; come, Mistress Page.—I pray you, pardon me; pray heartily pardon me.
Page. Let 's go in, gentlemen; but, trust me, we 'll mock him. I do invite you to-morrow morning to my house to breakfast: after, we 'll a-birding together; I have a fine hawk for the bush. Shall it be so?
Ford. Any thing.
Evans. If there is one, I shall make two in the company.
Caius. If there be one or two, I shall make-a the turd.
Ford. Pray you, go, Master Page.
Evans. I pray you now, remembrance to-morrow on the lousy knave, mine host.
Caius. Dat is good; by gar, with all my heart!
Evans. A lousy knave, to have his gibes and his mockeries! [*Exeunt.*

Scene IV.

A room in Page's house.

Enter Fenton and Anne Page.

Fent. I see I cannot get thy father's love;
Therefore no more turn me to him, sweet Nan.
Anne. Alas, how then?

Fent. Why, thou must be thyself.
He doth object I am too great of birth;
And that, my state being gall'd with my expense,
I seek to heal it only by his wealth:
Besides these, other bars he lays before me,—
My riots past, my wild societies;
And tells me 'tis a thing impossible
I should love thee but as a property.

Anne. May be he tells you true.

Fent. No, heaven so speed me in my time to come!
Albeit I will confess thy feather's wealth
Was the first motive that I woo'd thee, Anne:
Yet, wooing thee, I found thee of more value
Than stamps in gold or sums in sealed bags;
And 'tis the very riches of thyself
That now I aim at.

Anne. Gentle Master Fenton,
Yet seek my father's love; still seek it, sir:
If opportunity and humblest suit
Cannot attain it, why, then,—hark you hither!

[*They converse apart.*

Enter Shallow, Slender, and Mistress Quickly.

Shal. Break their talk, Mistress Quickly: my kinsman shall speak for himself.

Slen. I 'll make a shaft or a bolt on 't: 'slid, 'tis but venturing.

Shal. Be not dismayed.

Slen. No, she shall not dismay me: I care not for that, but that I am afeard.

Quick. Hark ye; Master Slender would speak a word with you.

Anne. I come to him. [*Aside*] This is my father's choice.
O, what a world of vile ill-favour'd faults
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a-year!
Quick. And how does good Master Fenton? Pray you, a word with you.
Shal. She's coming; to her, coz. O boy, thou hadst a father!
Slen. I had a father, Mistress Anne; my uncle can tell you good jests of him. Pray you, uncle, tell Mistress Anne the jest, how my father stole two geese out of a pen, good uncle.
Shal. Mistress Anne, my cousin loves you.
Slen. Ay, that I do; as well as I love any woman in Gloucestershire.
Shal. He will maintain you like a gentlewoman.
Slen. Ay, that I will, come cut and long-tail, under the degree of a squire.
Shal. He will make you a hundred and fifty pounds jointure.
Anne. Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself.
Shal. Marry, I thank you for it; I thank you for that good comfort. She calls you, coz: I'll leave you.
Anne. Now, Master Slender,—
Slen. Now, good Mistress Anne, —
Anne. What is your will?
Slen. My will! od's heartlings, that's a pretty jest indeed! I ne'er made my will yet, I thank heaven; I am not such a sickly creature, I give heaven praise.
Anne. I mean, Master Slender, what would you with me?

Slen. Truly, for mine own part, I would little or nothing with you. Your father and my uncle hath made motions: if it be my luck, so; if not, happy man be his dole! They can tell you how things go better than I can: you may ask your father; here he comes.

Enter Page and Mistress Page.

Page. Now, Master Slender: love him, daughter Anne.—Why, how now! what does Master Fenton here? You wrong me, sir, thus still to haunt my house: I told you, sir, my daughter is disposed of.

Fent. Nay, Master Page, be not impatient.

Mrs Page. Good Master Fenton, come not to my child.

Page. She is no match for you.

Fent. Sir, will you hear me?

Page. No, good Master Fenton.
Come, Master Shallow; come, son Slender, in.
Knowing my mind, you wrong me, Master Fenton. [*Exeunt Page, Shal., and Slen.*

Quick. Speak to Mistress Page.

Fent. Good Mistress Page, for that I love your daughter
In such a righteous fashion as I do,
Perforce, against all checks, rebukes and manners,
I must advance the colours of my love,
And not retire: let me have your good will.

Anne. Good mother, do not marry me to yond fool.

Mrs Page. I mean it not; I seek you a better husband.

Quick. That 's my master, master doctor.

Anne. Alas, I had rather be set quick i' the earth,
And bowl'd to death with turnips!

Mrs Page. Come, trouble not yourself. Good Master Fenton.
I will not be your friend nor enemy:
My daughter will I question how she loves you,
And as I find her, so am I affected.
Till then farewell, sir: she must needs go in;
Her father will be angry.

Fent. Farewell, gentle mistress: farewell, Nan.

[*Exeunt Mrs Page and Anne.*

Quick. This is my doing now: 'Nay,' said I, 'will you cast away your child on a fool, and a physician? Look on Master Fenton': this is my doing.

Fent. I thank thee; and I pray thee, once to-night
Give my sweet Nan this ring: there's for thy pains.

Quick. Now heaven send thee good fortune! [*Exit Fenton.*] A kind heart he hath: a woman would run through fire and water for such a kind heart. But yet I would my master had Mistress Anne; or I would Master Slender had her; or, in sooth, I would Master Fenton had her: I will do what I can for them all three; for so I have promised, and I 'll be as good as my word; but speciously for Master Fenton. Well, I must of another errand to Sir John Falstaff from my two mistresses: what a beast am I to slack it! [*Exit.*

Scene V.

A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter Falstaff and Bardolph.

Fal. Bardolph, I say,—

Bard. Here, sir.

Fal. Go fetch me a quart of sack; put a toast in 't. [*Exit Bard.*] Have I lived to be carried in a basket, like a barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown in the Thames? Well, if I be served such another trick, I 'll have my brains ta'en out, and buttered, and give them to a dog for a new-year's gift. The rogues slighted me into the river with as little remorse as they would have drowned a blind bitch's puppies, fifteen i' the litter: and you may know by my size that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking; if the bottom were as deep as hell, I should down. I had been drowned, but that the shore was shelvy and shallow,—a death that I abhor; for the water swells a man; and what a thing should I have been when I had been swelled! I should have been a mountain of mummy.

Re-enter Bardolph with sack.

Bard. Here 's Mistress Quickly, sir, to speak with you.

Fal. Come, let me pour in some sack to the Thames water; for my belly 's as cold as if I had swallowed snowballs for pills to cool the reins. Call her in.

Bard. Come in, woman!

Enter Mrs Quickly.

Quick. By your leave; I cry you mercy: give your worship good morrow.

Fal. Take away these chalices. Go brew me a pottle of sack finely.

Bard. With eggs, sir?

Fal. Simple of itself; I'll no pullet-sperm in my brewage. [*Exit Bardolph.*] How now!

Quick. Marry, sir, I come to your worship from Mistress Ford.

Fal. Mistress Ford! I have had ford enough; I was thrown into the ford; I have my belly full of ford.

Quick. Alas the day! good heart, that was not her fault: she does so take on with her men; they mistook their erection.

Fal. So did I mine, to build upon a foolish woman's promise.

Quick. Well, she laments, sir, for it, that it would yearn your heart to see it. Her husband goes this morning a-birding; she desires you once more to come to her between eight and nine: I must carry her word quickly: she'll make you amends, I warrant you.

Fal. Well, I will visit her: tell her so; and bid her think what a man is: let her consider his frailty, and then judge of my merit.

Quick. I will tell her.

Fal. Do so. Between nine and ten, sayest thou?

Quick. Eight and nine, sir.

Fal. Well, be gone: I will not miss her.

Quick. Peace be with you, sir. [*Exit*

Fal. I marvel I hear not of Master Brook; he sent me word to stay within: I like his money well. —O, here he comes.

Enter Ford.

Ford. Bless you, sir!

Fal. Now, Master Brook,—you come to know what hath passed between me and Ford's wife?

Ford. That, indeed, Sir John, is my business.

Fal. Master Brook, I will not lie to you: I was at her house the hour she appointed me.

Ford. And sped you, sir?

Fal. Very ill-favouredly, Master Brook.

Ford. How so, sir? Did she change her determination?

Fal. No, Master Brook; but the peaking Cornuto her husband, Master Brook, dwelling in a continual 'larum of jealousy, comes me in the instant of our encounter, after we had embraced, kissed, protested, and, as it were, spoke the prologue of our comedy; and at his heels a rabble of his companions, thither provoked and instigated by his distemper, and, forsooth, to search his house for his wife's love.

Ford. What, while you were there?

Fal. While I was there.

Ford. And did he search for you, and could not find you?

Fal. You shall hear. As good luck would have it, comes in one Mistress Page; gives intelligence of Ford's approach; and, in her invention and Ford's wife's distraction, they conveyed me into a buck-basket.

Ford. A buck-basket!

Fal. By the Lord, a buck-basket!—rammed me in with foul shirts and smocks, socks, foul stockings, greasy napkins; that, Master Brook, there was the rankest compound of villanous smell that ever offended nostril.

Ford. And how long lay you there?

Fal. Nay, you shall hear, Master Brook, what I have suffered to bring this woman to evil for your good. Being thus crammed in the basket, a couple of Ford's knaves, his hinds, were called forth by their mistress to carry me in the name of foul clothes to Datchet-lane: they took me on their shoulders; met the jealous knave their master in the door, who asked them once or twice what they had in their basket: I quaked for fear, lest the lunatic knave would have searched it; but fate, ordaining he should be a cuckold, held his hand. Well: on went he for a search, and away went I for foul clothes. But mark the sequel, Master Brook: I suffered the pangs of three several deaths; first, an intolerable fright, to be detected with a jealous rotten bell-wether; next, to be compassed, like a good bilbo, in the circumference of a peck, hilt to point, heel to head; and then, to be stopped in, like a strong distillation, with stinking clothes that fretted in their own grease: think of that,—a man of my kidney,—think of that,—that am as subject to heat as butter; a man of continual dissolution and thaw: it was a miracle to 'scape suffocation. And in the height of this bath, when I was more than half stewed in grease, like a Dutch dish, to be thrown into the Thames, and cooled, glowing hot, in that surge, like a horse-shoe; think of that,—hissing hot,—think of that, Master Brook.

Ford. In good sadness, sir, I am sorry that for my

sake you have suffered all this. My suit, then, is desperate; you 'll undertake her no more?

Fal. Master Brook, I will be thrown into Etna, as I have been into Thames, ere I will leave her thus. Her husband is this morning gone a-birding: I have received from her another embassy of meeting; 'twixt eight and nine is the hour, Master Brook.

Ford. 'Tis past eight already, sir.

Fal. Is it? I will then address me to my appointment. Come to me at your convenient leisure, and you shall know how I speed; and the conclusion shall be crowned with your enjoying her. Adieu. You shall have her, Master Brook; Master Brook, you shall cuckold Ford. [*Exit.*

Ford. Hum! ha! is this a vision? is this a dream? do I sleep? Master Ford, awake! awake, Master Ford! there 's a hole made in your best coat, Master Ford. This 'tis to be married! this 'tis to have linen and buck-baskets! Well, I will proclaim myself what I am: I will now take the lecher; he is at my house; he cannot 'scape me; 'tis impossible he should; he cannot creep into a half-penny purse, nor into a pepper-box: but, lest the devil that guides him should aid him, I will search impossible places. Though what I am I cannot avoid, yet to be what I would not shall not make me tame: if I have horns to make one mad, let the proverb go with me,—I 'll be horn mad. [*Exit.*

ACT FOURTH.

Scene I.

A street.

Enter Mistress Page, Mistress Quickly, and William.

Mrs Page. Is he at Master Ford's already, think'st thou?

Quick. Sure he is by this, or will be presently: but, truly, he is very courageous mad about his throwing into the water. Mistress Ford desires you to come suddenly.

Mrs Page. I 'll be with her by and by; I 'll but bring my young man here to school. Look, where his master comes; 'tis a playing-day, I see.

Enter Sir Hugh Evans.

How now, Sir Hugh! no school to-day?

Evans. No; Master Slender is let the boys leave to play.

Quick. Blessing of his heart!

Mrs Page. Sir Hugh, my husband says my son profits nothing in the world at his book. I pray you, ask him some questions in his accidence.

Evans. Come hither, William; hold up your head; come.

Mrs Page. Come on, sirrah; hold up your head; answer your master, be not afraid.

Evans. William, how many numbers is in nouns?

Will. Two.

Quick. Truly, I thought there had been one number more, because they say, ' Od's nouns.'

Evans. Peace your tattlings! What is 'fair,' William?

Will. Pulcher.

Quick. Polecats! there are fairer things than polecats, sure.

Evans. You are a very simplicity 'oman: I pray you, peace.—What is 'lapis,' William?

Will. A stone.

Evans. And what is 'a stone,' William?

Will. A pebble.

Evans. No, it is 'lapis': I pray you, remember in your prain.

Will. Lapis.

Evans. That is a good William. What is he, William, that does lend articles?

Will. Articles are borrowed of the pronoun, and be thus declined, Singulariter, nominativo, hic, hæc, hoc.

Evans. Nominativo, hig, hag, hog; pray you, mark: genitivo, hujus. Well, what is your accusative case?

Will. Accusativo, hinc.

Evans. I pray you, have your remembrance, child; accusativo, hung, hang, hog.

Quick. 'Hang-hog' is Latin for bacon, I warrant you.

Evans. Leave your prabbles, 'oman.—What is the focative case, William.

Will. O,—vocativo, O.

Evans. Remember, William; focative is caret.

Quick. And that 's a good root.

Evans. 'Oman, forbear.

Mrs Page. Peace!

Evans. What is your genitive case plural, William?

Will. Genitive case!

Evans. Ay.

Will. Genitive,—horum, harum, horum.

Quick. Vengeance of Jenny's case! fie on her! never name her, child, if she be a whore.

Evans. For shame, 'oman.

Quick. You do ill to teach the child such words:—he teaches him to hick and to hack, which they 'll do fast enough of themselves, and to call 'horum': —fie upon you!

Evans. 'Oman, art thou lunatics? hast thou no understandings for thy cases, and the numbers of the genders? Thou art as foolish Christian creatures as I would desires.

Mrs Page. Prithee, hold thy peace.

Evans. Show me now, William, some declensions of your pronouns.

Will. Forsooth, I have forgot.

Evans. It is qui, quæ, quod: if you forget your 'quies,' your 'quæs,' and your 'quods,' you must be preeches. Go your ways, and play; go.

Mrs Page. He is a better scholar than I thought he was.

Evans. He is a good sprag memory. Farewell, Mistress Page.

Mrs Page. Adieu, good Sir Hugh. [*Exit Sir Hugh.* Get you home, boy. Come, we stay too long.

[*Exeunt.*

Scene II.

A room in Ford's house.

Enter Falstaff and Mrs Ford.

Fal. Mistress Ford, your sorrow hath eaten up my sufferance. I see you are obsequious in your love, and I profess requital to a hair's breadth; not only, Mistress Ford, in the simple office of love, but in all the accoutrement, complement, and ceremony of it. But are you sure of your husband now?

Mrs Ford. He 's a-birding, sweet Sir John.

Mrs Page. [*Within*] What, ho, gossip Ford! what, ho!

Mrs Ford. Step into the chamber, Sir John.

[*Exit Falstaff.*

Enter Mistress Page.

Mrs Page. How now, sweetheart! who 's at home besides yourself?

Mrs Ford. Why, none but mine own people.

Mrs Page. Indeed!

Mrs Ford. No, certainly. [*Aside to her*] Speak louder.

Mrs Page. Truly, I am so glad you have nobody here.

Mrs Ford. Why?

Mrs Page. Why, woman, your husband is in his old lunes again: he so takes on yonder with my husband; so rails against all married mankind; so curses all Eve's daughters, of what complexion soever; and so buffets himself on the forehead, crying, 'Peer out, peer out!' that any madness I ever yet beheld seemed but tameness,

civility, and patience, to this his distemper he is in now: I am glad the fat knight is not here.

Mrs Ford. Why, does he talk of him?

Mrs Page. Of none but him; and swears he was carried out, the last time he searched for him, in a basket; protests to my husband he is now here; and hath drawn him and the rest of their company from their sport, to make another experiment of his suspicion: but I am glad the knight is not here; now he shall see his own foolery.

Mrs Ford. How near is he, Mistress Page?

Mrs Page. Hard by, at street end; he will be here anon.

Mrs Ford. I am undone!—the knight is here.

Mrs Page. Why, then, you are utterly shamed, and he 's but a dead man. What a woman are you! —Away with him, away with him! better shame than murder.

Mrs Ford. Which way should he go? how should I bestow him? Shall I put him into the basket again?

Re-enter Falstaff.

Fal. No, I 'll come no more i' the basket. May I not go out ere he come?

Mrs Page. Alas, three of Master Ford's brothers watch the door with pistols, that none shall issue out; otherwise you might slip away ere he came. But what make you here?

Fal. What shall I do?—I 'll creep up into the chimney.

Mrs Ford. There they always use to discharge their birding-pieces. Creep into the kiln-hole.

Fal. Where is it?

Mrs Ford. He will see there, on my word. Neither press, coffer, chest, trunk, well, vault, but he hath an abstract for the remembrance of such places, and goes to them by his note: there is no hiding you in the house.

Fal. I 'll go out, then.

Mrs Page. If you go out in your own semblance, you die, Sir John. Unless you go out disguised,—

Mrs Ford. How might we disguise him?

Mrs Page. Alas the day, I know not! There is no woman's gown big enough for him; otherwise he might put on a hat, a muffler, and a kerchief, and so escape.

Fal. Good hearts, devise something: any extremity rather than a mischief.

Mrs Ford. My maid's aunt, the fat woman of Brentford, has a gown above.

Mrs Page. On my word, it will serve him; she 's as big as he is: and there 's her thrummed hat, and her muffler too. Run up, Sir John.

Mrs Ford. Go, go, sweet Sir John: Mistress Page and I will look some linen for your head.

Mrs Page. Quick, quick! we 'll come dress you straight: put on the gown the while. [*Exit Falstaff.*

Mrs Ford. I would my husband would meet him in this shape: he cannot abide the old woman of Brentford; he swears she 's a witch; forbade her my house, and hath threatened to beat her.

Mrs Page. Heaven guide him to thy husband's cudgel, and the devil guide his cudgel afterwards!

Mrs Ford. But is my husband coming?

Mrs Page. Ay, in good sadness, is he; and talks of the basket too, howsoever he hath had intelligence.

Mrs Ford. We 'll try that; for I 'll appoint my men to carry the basket again, to meet him at the door with it, as they did last time.

Mrs Page. Nay, but he 'll be here presently: let 's go dress him like the witch of Brentford.

Mrs Ford. I 'll first direct my men what they shall do with the basket. Go up; I 'll bring linen for him straight. [*Exit.*

Mrs Page. Hang him, dishonest varlet! we cannot misuse him enough.
We 'll leave a proof, by that which we will do,
Wives may be merry, and yet honest too:
We do not act that often jest and laugh;
'Tis old, but true,—Still swine eats all the draff.
[*Exit.*

Re-enter Mistress Ford with two Servants.

Mrs Ford. Go, sirs, take the basket again on your shoulders: your master is hard at door; if he bid you set it down, obey him: quickly, dispatch. [*Exit.*

First Serv. Come, come, take it up.

Sec. Serv. Pray heaven, it be not full of knight again.

First Serv. I hope not; I had as lief bear so much lead.

Enter Ford, Page, Shallow, Caius, and Sir Hugh Evans.

Ford. Ay, but if it prove true, Master Page, have you any way then to unfool me again? Set

down the basket, villain! Somebody call my wife. Youth in a basket!—O you pandarly rascals! there 's a knot, a ging, a pack, a conspiracy against me: now shall the devil be shamed.—What, wife, I say!—Come, come forth! Behold what honest clothes you send forth to bleaching!

Page. Why, this passes, Master Ford; you are not to go loose any longer; you must be pinioned.

Evans. Why, this is lunatics! this is mad as a mad dog!

Shal. Indeed, Master Ford, this is not well, indeed.

Ford. So say I too, sir.

Re-enter Mistress Ford.

Come hither, Mistress Ford; Mistress Ford, the honest woman, the modest wife, the virtuous creature, that hath the jealous fool to her husband! I suspect without cause, mistress, do I?

Mrs Ford. Heaven be my witness you do, if you suspect me in any dishonesty.

Ford. Well said, brazen-face! hold it out. Come forth, sirrah! [*Pulling clothes out of the basket.*

Page. This passes!

Mrs Ford. Are you not ashamed? let the clothes alone.

Ford. I shall find you anon.

Evans. 'Tis unreasonable! Will you take up your wife's clothes? Come away.

Ford. Empty the basket, I say!

Mrs Ford. Why, man, why?

Ford. Master Page, as I am a man, there was one conveyed out of my house yesterday in this

basket: why may not he be there again? In my house I am sure he is: my intelligence is true; my jealousy is reasonable. Pluck me out all the linen.

Mrs Ford. If you find a man there, he shall die a flea's death.

Page. Here 's no man.

Shal. By my fidelity, this is not well, Master Ford; this wrongs you.

Evans. Master Ford, you must pray, and not follow the imaginations of your own heart: this is jealousies.

Ford. Well, he 's not here I seek for.

Page. No, nor nowhere else but in your brain.

Ford. Help to search my house this one time. If I find not what I seek, show no colour for my extremity; let me for ever be your table-sport; let them say of me, 'As jealous as Ford, that searched a hollow walnut for his wife's leman.' Satisfy me once more; once more search with me.

Mrs Ford. What, ho, Mistress Page! come you and the old woman down; my husband will come into the chamber.

Ford. Old woman! what old woman 's that?

Mrs Ford. Why, it is my maid's aunt of Brentford.

Ford. A witch, a quean, an old cozening quean! Have I not forbid her my house? She comes of errands, does she? We are simple men; we do not know what 's brought to pass under the profession of fortune-telling. She works by charms, by spells, by the figure, and such daubery as this is beyond our element: we know

nothing. Come down, you witch, you hag, you; come down, I say!

Mrs Ford. Nay, good, sweet husband!—Good gentlemen, let him not strike the old woman.

Re-enter Falstaff in woman's clothes, and Mistress Page.

Mrs Page. Come, Mother Prat; come, give me your hand.

Ford. I 'll prat her. [*Beating him*] Out of my door, you witch, you rag, you baggage, you polecat, you ronyon! out, out! I 'll conjure you, I 'll fortune-tell you. [*Exit Falstaff.*

Mrs Page. Are you not ashamed? I think you have killed the poor woman.

Mrs Ford. Nay, he will do it. 'Tis a goodly credit for you.

Ford. Hang her, witch!

Evans. By yea and no, I think the 'oman is a witch indeed: I like not when a 'oman has a great peard; I spy a great peard under his muffler.

Ford. Will you follow, gentlemen? I beseech you, follow; see but the issue of my jealousy: if I cry out thus upon no trail, never trust me when I open again.

Page. Let 's obey his humour a little further: come, gentlemen.

[*Exeunt Ford, Page, Shal., Caius, and Evans.*

Mrs Page. Trust me, he beat him most pitifully.

Mrs Ford. Nay, by the mass, that he did not; he beat him most unpitifully methought.

Mrs Page. I 'll have the cudgel hallowed and hung o'er the altar; it hath done meritorious service.

Mrs Ford. What think you? may we, with the warrant of womanhood and the witness of a good conscience, pursue him with any further revenge?

Mrs Page. The spirit of wantonness is, sure, scared out of him: if the devil have him not in fee-simple, with fine and recovery, he will never, I think, in the way of waste, attempt us again.

Mrs Ford. Shall we tell our husbands how we have served him?

Mrs Page. Yes, by all means; if it be but to scrape the figures out of your husband's brains. If they can find in their hearts the poor unvirtuous fat knight shall be any further afflicted, we two will still be the ministers.

Mrs Ford. I 'll warrant they 'll have him publicly shamed: and methinks there would be no period to the jest, should he not be publicly shamed.

Mrs Page. Come, to the forge with it, then; shape it: I would not have things cool. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III.

A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter Host and Bardolph.

Bard. Sir, the Germans desire to have three of your horses: the duke himself will be to-morrow at court, and they are going to meet him.

Host. What duke should that be comes so secretly? I hear not of him in the court. Let me speak with the gentlemen: they speak English?

Bard. Ay, sir; I 'll call them to you.
Host. They shall have my horses; but I 'll make them pay; I 'll sauce them: they have had my house a week at command; I have turned away my other guests: they must come off; I 'll sauce them. Come. [*Exeunt.*

Scene IV.

A room in Ford's house.

Enter Page, Ford, Mistress Page, Mistress Ford, and Sir Hugh Evans.

Evans. 'T is one of the best discretions of a 'oman as ever I did look upon.
Page. And did he send you both these letters at an instant?
Mrs Page. Within a quarter of an hour.
Ford. Pardon me, wife. Henceforth do what thou wilt;
I rather will suspect the sun with cold
Than thee with wantonness: now doth thy honour stand,
In him that was of late an heretic,
As firm as faith.
Page. 'Tis well, 'tis well; no more:
Be not as extreme in submission
As in offence.
But let our plot go forward: let our wives
Yet once again, to make us public sport,
Appoint a meeting with this old fat fellow,
Where we may take him, and disgrace him for it.
Ford. There is no better way than that they spoke of.
Page. How? to send him word they 'll meet him in

the Park at midnight? Fie, fie! he 'll never come.

Evans. You say he has been thrown in the rivers, and has been grievously peaten, as an old 'oman: methinks there should be terrors in him that he should not come; methinks his flesh is punished, he shall have no desires.

Page. So think I too.

Mrs Ford. Devise but how you 'll use him when he comes,
And let us two devise to bring him thither.

Mrs Page. There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,
And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful manner:
You have heard of such a spirit; and well you know
The superstitious idle-headed eld
Received, and did deliver to our age,
This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.

Page. Why, yet there want not many that do fear
In deep of night to walk by this Herne's oak:
But what of this?

Mrs Ford. Marry, this is our device;
That Falstaff at that oak shall meet with us.

Page. Well, let it not be doubted but he 'll come.
And in this shape when you have brought him thither,
What shall be done with him? what is your plot?

Mrs Page. That likewise have we thought upon, and thus:
Nan Page my daughter and my little son
And three or four more of their growth we 'll dress

Like urchins, ouphes and fairies, green and white,
With rounds of waxen tapers on their heads,
And rattles in their hands: upon a sudden,
As Falstaff, she, and I, are newly met,
Let them from forth a sawpit rush at once
With some diffused song: upon their sight,
We two in great amazedness will fly:
Then let them all encircle him about,
And, fairy-like, to pinch the unclean knight;
And ask him why, that hour of fairy revel,
In their so sacred paths he dares to tread
In shape profane.

Mrs Ford. And till he tell the truth,
Let the supposed fairies pinch him sound,
And burn him with their tapers.

Mrs Page. The truth being known,
We 'll all present ourselves, dis-horn the spirit,
And mock him home to Windsor.

Ford. The children must
Be practised well to this, or they 'll ne'er do 't.

Evans. I will teach the children their behaviours; and I will be like a jack-an-apes also, to burn the knight with my taber.

Ford. That will be excellent. I 'll go buy them vizards.

Mrs Page. My Nan shall be the queen of all the fairies,
Finely attired in a robe of white.

Page. That silk will I go buy. [*Aside*] And in that time
Shall Master Slender steal my Nan away,
And marry her at Eton. Go send to Falstaff straight.

Ford. Nay, I 'll to him again in name of Brook:
He 'll tell me all his purpose: sure, he 'll come.

Mrs Page. Fear not you that. Go get us properties
And tricking for our fairies.
Evans. Let us about it: it is admirable pleasures and fery honest knaveries.
[*Exeunt Page, Ford, and Evans.*
Mrs Page. Go, Mistress Ford.
Send quickly to Sir John, to know his mind.
[*Exit Mrs Ford.*
I 'll to the doctor: he hath my good will,
And none but he, to marry with Nan Page.
That Slender, though well landed, is an idiot;
And he my husband best of all affects.
The doctor is well money'd, and his friends
Potent at court: he, none but he, shall have her,
Though twenty thousand worthier come to crave her.
[*Exit.*

Scene V.

A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter Host and Simple.

Host. What wouldst thou have, boor? what, thick-skin? speak, breathe, discuss; brief, short, quick, snap.
Sim. Marry, sir, I come to speak with Sir John Falstaff from Master Slender.
Host. There 's his chamber, his house, his castle, his standing-bed, and truckle-bed; 'tis painted about with the story of the Prodigal, fresh and new. Go knock and call; he 'll speak like an Anthropophaginian unto thee: knock, I say.
Sim. There 's an old woman, a fat woman, gone up

into his chamber: I 'll be so bold as stay, sir, till she come down; I come to speak with her, indeed.

Host. Ha! a fat woman! the knight may be robbed: I 'll call.—Bully knight! bully Sir John! speak from thy lungs military: art thou there? it is thine host, thine Ephesian, calls.

Fal. [*Above*] How now, mine host!

Host. Here 's a Bohemian-Tartar tarries the coming down of thy fat woman. Let her descend, bully, let her descend; my chambers are honourable: fie! privacy? fie!

Enter Falstaff.

Fal. There was, mine host, an old fat woman even now with me; but she 's gone.

Sim. Pray you, sir, was 't not the wise woman of Brentford?

Fal. Ay, marry, was it, muscle-shell: what would you with her?

Sim. My master, sir, Master Slender, sent to her, seeing her go through the streets, to know, sir, whether one Nym, sir, that beguiled him of a chain, had the chain or no.

Fal. I spake with the old woman about it.

Sim. And what says she, I pray, sir?

Fal. Marry, she says that the very same man that beguiled Master Slender of his chain cozened him of it.

Sim. I would I could have spoken with the woman herself; I had other things to have spoken with her too from him.

Fal. What are they? let us know.
Host. Ay, come; quick.
Sim. I may not conceal them, sir.
Host. Conceal them, or thou diest.
Sim. Why, sir, they were nothing but about Mistress Anne Page; to know if it were my master's fortune to have her or no.
Fal. 'Tis, 'tis his fortune.
Sim. What, sir?
Fal. To have her, or no. Go; say the woman told me so.
Sim. May I be bold to say so, sir?
Fal. Ay, sir; like who more bold.
Sim. I thank your worship: I shall make my master glad with these tidings. [*Exit.*
Host. Thou art clerkly, thou art clerkly, Sir John. Was there a wise woman with thee?
Fal. Ay, that there was, mine host; one that hath taught me more wit than ever I learned before in my life; and I paid nothing for it neither, but was paid for my learning.

Enter Bardolph.

Bard. Out, alas, sir! cozenage, mere cozenage!
Host. Where be my horses? speak well of them, varletto.
Bard. Run away with the cozeners: for so soon as I came beyond Eton, they threw me off, from behind one of them, in a slough of mire; and set spurs and away, like three German devils, three Doctor Faustuses.
Host. They are gone but to meet the duke, villain:

do not say they be fled; Germans are honest men.

Enter Sir Hugh Evans.

Evans. Where is mine host?

Host. What is the matter, sir?

Evans. Have a care of your entertainments: there is a friend of mine come to town, tells me there is three cozen-germans that has cozened all the hosts of Readins, of Maidenhead, of Colebrook, of horses and money. I tell you for good will, look you: you are wise, and full of gibes and vlouting-stocks, and 'tis not convenient you should be cozened. Fare you well. [*Exit.*

Enter Doctor Caius.

Caius. Vere is mine host de Jarteer?

Host. Here, master doctor, in perplexity and doubtful dilemma.

Caius. I cannot tell vat is dat: but it is tell-a me dat you make grand preparation for a duke de Jamany: by my trot, dere is no duke dat the court is know to come. I tell you for good vill: adieu. [*Exit.*

Host. Hue and cry, villain, go!—Assist me, knight. —I am undone!—Fly, run, hue and cry, villain! —I am undone! [*Exeunt Host and Bard.*

Fal. I would all the world might be cozened; for I have been cozened and beaten too. If it should come to the ear of the court, how I have been transformed, and how my transformation hath been washed and cudgelled, they would melt me out of my fat drop by drop, and liquor fisher-

men's boots with me: I warrant they would whip me with their fine wits till I were as crest-fallen as a dried pear. I never prospered since I forswore myself at primero. Well, if my wind were but long enough to say my prayers, I would repent.

Enter Mistress Quickly.

Now, whence come you?

Quick. From the two parties, forsooth.

Fal. The devil take one party, and his dam the other! and so they shall be both bestowed. I have suffered more for their sakes, more than the villanous inconstancy of man's disposition is able to bear.

Quick. And have not they suffered? Yes, I warrant; speciously one of them; Mistress Ford, good heart, is beaten black and blue, that you cannot see a white spot about her.

Fal. What tell'st thou me of black and blue? I was beaten myself into all the colours of the rainbow; and I was like to be apprehended for the witch of Brentford: but that my admirable dexterity of wit, my counterfeiting the action of an old woman, delivered me, the knave constable had set me i' the stocks, i' the common stocks, for a witch.

Quick. Sir, let me speak with you in your chamber: you shall hear how things go; and, I warrant, to your content. Here is a letter will say somewhat. Good hearts, what ado here is to bring you together! Sure, one of you does not serve heaven well, that you are so crossed.

Fal. Come up into my chamber. [*Exeunt.*

Scene VI.

The same. Another room in the Garter Inn.

Enter Fenton and Host.

Host. Master Fenton, talk not to me; my mind is heavy: I will give over all.

Fent. Yet hear me speak. Assist me in my purpose,
And, as I am a gentleman, I 'll give thee
A hundred pound in gold more than your loss.

Host. I will hear you, Master Fenton; and I will at the least keep your counsel.

Fent. From time to time I have acquainted you
With the dear love I bear to fair Anne Page;
Who mutually hath answer'd my affection,
So far forth as herself might be her chooser,
Even to my wish: I have a letter from her
Of such contents as you will wonder at;
The mirth whereof so larded with my matter,
That neither singly can be manifested,
Without the show of both; fat Falstaff
Hath a great scene: the image of the jest
I 'll show you here at large. Hark, good mine host.
To-night at Herne's oak, just 'twixt twelve and one,
Must my sweet Nan present the Fairy Queen;
The purpose why, is here: in which disguise,
While other jests are something rank on foot,
Her father hath commanded her to slip
Away with Slender, and with him at Eton
Immediately to marry: she hath consented:
Now, sir,
Her mother, even strong against that match,

And firm for Doctor Caius, hath appointed
That he shall likewise shuffle her away,
While other sports are tasking of their minds,
And at the deanery, where a priest attends,
Straight marry her: to this her mother's plot
She seemingly obedient likewise hath
Made promise to the doctor. Now, thus it rests:
Her father means she shall be all in white;
And in that habit, when Slender sees his time,
To take her by the hand and bid her go,
She shall go with him: her mother hath intended,
The better to denote her to the doctor,—
For they must all be mask'd and vizarded,—
That quaint in green she shall be loose enrobed,
With ribands pendent, flaring 'bout her head;
And when the doctor spies his vantage ripe,
To pinch her by the hand, and, on that token,
The maid hath given consent to go with him.

Host. Which means she to deceive, father or mother?

Fent. Both, my good host, to go along with me:
And here it rests,—that you 'll procure the vicar
To stay for me at church 'twixt twelve and one,
And, in the lawful name of marrying,
To give our hearts united ceremony.

Host. Well, husband your device; I 'll to the vicar:
Bring you the maid, you shall not lack a priest.

Fent. So shall I evermore be bound to thee;
Besides, I 'll make a present recompense. [*Exeunt.*

ACT FIFTH.

Scene I.

A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter Falstaff and Mistress Quickly.

Fal. Prithee, no more prattling; go. I 'll hold. This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd numbers. Away! go. They say there is divinity in odd numbers, either in nativity, chance, or death. Away!

Quick. I 'll provide you a chain; and I 'll do what I can to get you a pair of horns.

Fal. Away, I say; time wears: hold up your head, and mince. [*Exit Mrs Quickly.*

Enter Ford.

How now, Master Brook! Master Brook, the matter will be known to-night, or never. Be you in the Park about midnight, at Herne's oak, and you shall see wonders.

Ford. Went you not to her yesterday, sir, as you told me you had appointed?

Fal. I went to her, Master Brook, as you see, like a poor old man: but I came from her, Master Brook, like a poor old woman. That same knave Ford, her husband, hath the finest mad devil of jealousy in him, Master Brook, that ever governed frenzy. I will tell you:—he beat me grievously, in the shape of a woman; for in the shape of man, Master Brook, I fear not Goliath

with a weaver's beam; because I know also life is a shuttle. I am in haste; go along with me: I 'll tell you all, Master Brook. Since I plucked geese, played truant, and whipped top, I knew not what 'twas to be beaten till lately. Follow me: I 'll tell you strange things of this knave Ford, on whom to-night I will be revenged, and I will deliver his wife into your hand. Follow. Strange things in hand, Master Brook. Follow.

[*Exeunt.*

Scene II.

Windsor Park.

Enter Page, Shallow, and Slender.

Page. Come, come; we 'll couch i' the castle-ditch till we see the light of our fairies. Remember, son Slender, my daughter.

Slen. Ay, forsooth; I have spoke with her, and we have a nay-word how to know one another: I come to her in white, and cry 'mum'; she cries 'budget'; and by that we know one another.

Shal. That 's good too: but what needs either your 'mum' or her 'budget'? the white will decipher her well enough. It hath struck ten o'clock.

Page. The night is dark; light and spirits will become it well. Heaven prosper our sport! No man means evil but the devil, and we shall know him by his horns. Let 's away; follow me.

[*Exeunt.*

Scene III.

A street leading to the Park.

Enter Mistress Page, Mistress Ford, and Doctor Caius.

Mrs Page. Master Doctor, my daughter is in green: when you see your time, take her by the hand, away with her to the deanery, and dispatch it quickly. Go before into the Park: we two must go together.

Caius. I know vat I have to do. Adieu.

Mrs Page. Fare you well, sir. [*Exit Caius.*] My husband will not rejoice so much at the abuse of Falstaff as he will chafe at the doctor's marrying my daughter: but 'tis no matter, better a little chiding than a great deal of heart-break.

Mrs Ford. Where is Nan now and her troop of fairies, and the Welsh devil Hugh?

Mrs Page. They are all couched in a pit hard by Herne's oak, with obscured lights; which, at the very instant of Falstaff's and our meeting, they will at once display to the night.

Mrs Ford. That cannot choose but amaze him.

Mrs Page. If he be not amazed, he will be mocked; if he be amazed, he will every way be mocked.

Mrs Ford. We 'll betray him finely.

Mrs Page. Against such lewdsters and their lechery
Those that betray them do no treachery.

Mrs Ford. The hour draws on. To the oak, to the oak! [*Exeunt.*

Scene IV.

Windsor Park.

Enter Sir Hugh Evans disguised, with others as Fairies.

Evans. Trib, trib, fairies; come; and remember your parts: be pold, I pray you; follow me into the pit; and when I give the watch-'ords, do as I pid you: come, come; trib, trib. [*Exeunt.*

Scene V.

Another part of the Park.

Enter Falstaff disguised as Herne.

Fal. The Windsor bell hath struck twelve; the minute draws on. Now, the hot-blooded gods assist me! Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns. O powerful love! that, in some respects, makes a beast a man; in some other, a man a beast. You were also, Jupiter, a swan for the love of Leda. O omnipotent Love! how near the god drew to the complexion of a goose! A fault done first in the form of a beast;—O Jove, a beastly fault! And then another fault in the semblance of a fowl;—think on 't, Jove; a foul fault! When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do? For me, I am here a Windsor stag; and the fattest, I think, i' the forest. Send me a cool

rut-time, Jove, or who can blame me to piss my tallow?—Who comes here? my doe?

Enter Mistress Ford and Mistress Page.

Mrs Ford. Sir John! art thou there, my deer? my male deer?

Fal. My doe with the black scut! Let the sky rain potatoes; let it thunder to the tune of Green Sleeves, hail kissing-comfits, and snow eringoes; let there come a tempest of provocation, I will shelter me here.

Mrs Ford. Mistress Page is come with me, sweetheart.

Fal. Divide me like a bribed buck, each a haunch: I will keep my sides to myself, my shoulders for the fellow of this walk, and my horns I bequeath your husbands. Am I a woodman, ha? Speak I like Herne the hunter? Why, now is Cupid a child of conscience; he makes restitution. As I am a true spirit, welcome! [*Noise within.*

Mrs Page. Alas, what noise?

Mrs Ford. Heaven forgive our sins!

Fal. What should this be?

Mrs Ford.
Mrs Page. } Away, away! [*They run off.*

Fal. I think the devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that 's in me should set hell on fire; he would never else cross me thus.

Enter Sir Hugh Evans, disguised as before; Pistol, as Hobgoblin; Mistress Quickly, Anne Page, and others, as Fairies, with tapers.

Quick. Fairies, black, grey, green, and white,
You moonshine revellers, and shades of night,

You orphan heirs of fixed destiny,
Attend your office and your quality.
Crier Hobgoblin, make the fairy oyës.

Pist. Elves, list your names; silence, you airy toyës.
Cricket, to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap:
Where fires thou find'st unraked and hearths unswept,
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry:
Our radiant queen hates sluts and sluttery.

Fal. They are fairies; he that speaks to them shall die:
I 'll wink and couch: no man their works must eye.
[*Lies down upon his face.*

Evans. Where 's Bede? Go you, and where you find a maid
That, ere she sleep, has thrice her prayers said,
Raise up the organs of her fantasy;
Sleep she as sound as careless infancy:
But those as sleep and think not on their sins,
Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides, and shins.

Quick. About, about;
Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out:
Strew good luck, ouphes, on every sacred room;
That it may stand till the perpetual doom,
In state as wholesome as in state 'tis fit,
Worthy the owner, and the owner it.
The several chairs of order look you scour
With juice of balm and every precious flower:
Each fair instalment, coat, and several crest,
With loyal blazon, evermore be blest!
And nightly, meadow-fairies, look you sing,
Like to the Garter's compass, in a ring:
Th' expressure that it bears, green let it be,
More fertile-fresh than all the field to see;

And *Honi soit qui mal y pense* write
In emerald tufts, flowers purple, blue, and white;
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,
Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee:
Fairies use flowers for their charactery.
Away; disperse: but till 'tis one o'clock,
Our dance of custom round about the oak
Of Herne the hunter, let us not forget.

Evans. Pray you, lock hand in hand; yourselves in order set;
And twenty glow-worms shall our lanterns be,
To guide our measure round about the tree.
But, stay; I smell a man of middle-earth.

Fal. Heavens defend me from that Welsh fairy, lest he transform me to a piece of cheese!

Pist. Vile worm, thou wast o'erlook'd even in thy birth.

Quick. With trial-fire touch me his finger-end:
If he be chaste, the flame will back descend,
And turn him to no pain; but if he start,
It is the flesh of a corrupted heart.

Pist. A trial, come.

Evans. Come, will this wood take fire?

[*They burn him with their tapers.*

Fal. Oh, Oh, Oh!

Quick. Corrupt, corrupt, and tainted in desire!
About him, fairies; sing a scornful rhyme;
And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time.

Song.

Fie on sinful fantasy!
Fie on lust and luxury!
Lust is but a bloody fire,
Kindled with unchaste desire,

Fed in heart, whose flames aspire,
As thoughts do blow them, higher and higher.
Pinch him, fairies, mutually;
Pinch him for his villany;
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

During this song they pinch Falstaff. Doctor Caius comes one way, and steals away a boy in green; Slender another way, and takes off a boy in white; and Fenton comes, and steals away Anne Page. A noise of hunting is heard within. All the Fairies run away. Falstaff pulls off his buck's head, and rises.

Enter Page, Ford, Mistress Page, and Mistress Ford.

Page. Nay, do not fly; I think we have watch'd you now:
Will none but Herne the Hunter serve your turn?

Mrs Page. I pray you, come, hold up the jest no higher.
Now, good Sir John, how like you Windsor wives?
See you these, husband? do not these fair yokes
Become the forest better than the town?

Ford. Now, sir, who 's a cuckold now? Master Brook, Falstaff 's a knave, a cuckoldly knave; here are his horns, Master Brook: and, Master Brook, he hath enjoyed nothing of Ford's but his buck-basket, his cudgel, and twenty pounds of money, which must be paid to Master Brook; his horses are arrested for it, Master Brook.

Mrs Ford. Sir John, we have had ill luck; we could never meet. I will never take you for my love again; but I will always count you my deer.

Fal. I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass.

Ford. Ay, and an ox too: both the proofs are extant.

Fal. And these are not fairies? I was three or four times in the thought they were not fairies: and yet the guiltiness of my mind, the sudden surprise of my powers, drove the grossness of the foppery into a received belief, in despite of the teeth of all rhyme and reason, that they were fairies. See now how wit may be made a Jack-a-Lent, when 'tis upon ill employment!

Evans. Sir John Falstaff, serve Got, and leave your desires, and fairies will not pinse you.

Ford. Well said, fairy Hugh.

Evans. And leave you your jealousies too, I pray you.

Ford. I will never mistrust my wife again, till thou art able to woo her in good English.

Fal. Have I laid my brain in the sun and dried it, that it wants matter to prevent so gross o'erreaching as this? Am I ridden with a Welsh goat too? shall I have a coxcomb of frize? 'Tis time I were choked with a piece of toasted cheese.

Evans. Seese is not good to give putter; your pelly is all putter.

Fal. 'Seese' and 'putter'? Have I lived to stand at the taunt of one that makes fritters of English? This is enough to be the decay of lust and late-walking through the realm.

Mrs Page. Why, Sir John, do you think, though we would have thrust virtue out of our hearts by the head and shoulders, and have given ourselves without scruple to hell, that ever the devil could have made you our delight?

Ford. What, a hodge-pudding? a bag of flax?

Mrs Page. A puffed man?
Page. Old, cold, withered, and of intolerable entrails?
Ford. And one that is as slanderous as Satan?
Page. And as poor as Job?
Ford. And as wicked as his wife?
Evans. And given to fornications, and to taverns, and sack, and wine, and metheglins, and to drinkings, and swearings, and starings, pribbles and prabbles!
Fal. Well, I am your theme: you have the start of me; I am dejected; I am not able to answer the Welsh flannel: ignorance itself is a plummet o'er me: use me as you will.
Ford. Marry, sir, we 'll bring you to Windsor, to one Master Brook, that you have cozened of money, to whom you should have been a pandar: over and above that you have suffered, I think to repay that money will be a biting affliction.
Page. Yet be cheerful, knight: thou shalt eat a posset to-night at my house; where I will desire thee to laugh at my wife, that now laughs at thee: tell her Master Slender hath married her daughter.
Mrs Page. [*Aside*] Doctors doubt that: if Anne Page be my daughter, she is, by this, Doctor Caius' wife.

Enter Slender.

Slen. Whoa, ho! ho, father Page.
Page. Son, how now! how now, son! have you dispatched?
Slen. Dispatched! I 'll make the best in Gloucestershire know on 't; would I were hanged, la, else!

Page. Of what, son?

Slen. I came yonder at Eton to marry Mistress Anne Page, and she 's a great lubberly boy. If it had not been i' the church, I would have swinged him, or he should have swinged me. If I did not think it had been Anne Page, would I might never stir!—and 'tis a postmaster's boy.

Page. Upon my life, then, you took the wrong.

Slen. What need you tell me that? I think so, when I took a boy for a girl. If I had been married to him, for all he was in woman's apparel, I would not have had him.

Page. Why, this is your own folly. Did not I tell you how you should know my daughter by her garments?

Slen. I went to her in white, and cried 'mum,' and she cried 'budget,' as Anne and I had appointed; and yet it was not Anne, but a postmaster's boy.

Mrs Page. Good George, be not angry: I knew of your purpose; turned my daughter into green; and, indeed, she is now with the doctor at the deanery, and there married.

Enter Caius.

Caius. Vere is Mistress Page? By gar, I am cozened: I ha' married un garçon, a boy; un paysan, by gar, a boy; it is not Anne Page: by gar, I am cozened.

Mrs Page. Why, did you take her in green?

Caius. Ay, by gar, and 'tis a boy: by gar, I 'll raise all Windsor. [*Exit.*

Ford. This is strange. Who hath got the right Anne?

Page. My heart misgives me:—here comes Master Fenton.

Enter Fenton and Anne Page.

How now, Master Fenton!

Anne. Pardon, good father! good my mother, pardon!

Page. Now, mistress, how chance you went not with Master Slender?

Mrs Page. Why went you not with master doctor, maid?

Fent. You do amaze her: hear the truth of it.
You would have married her most shamefully,
Where there was no proportion held in love.
The truth is, she and I, long since contracted,
Are now so sure that nothing can dissolve us.
The offence is holy that she hath committed;
And this deceit loses the name of craft,
Of disobedience, or unduteous title;
Since therein she doth evitate and shun
A thousand irreligious cursed hours,
Which forced marriage would have brought upon her.

Ford. Stand not amazed; here is no remedy:
In love the heavens themselves do guide the state;
Money buys lands, and wives are sold by fate.

Fal. I am glad, though you have ta'en a special stand to strike at me, that your arrow hath glanced.

Page. Well, what remedy? Fenton, heaven give thee joy!
What cannot be eschew'd must be embraced.

Fal. When night-dogs run, all sorts of deer are chased.

Mrs Page. Well, I will muse no further. Master Fenton,
Heaven give you many, many merry days!
Good husband, let us every one go home,

And laugh this sport o'er by a country fire;
Sir John and all.

Ford. Let it be so. Sir John,
To Master Brook you yet shall hold your word;
For he to-night shall lie with Mistress Ford.

[*Exeunt.*

Glossary.

A-birding, bird-catching; III. iii. 232.

Abstract, inventory; IV. ii. 60.

Address, make ready; III. v. 133.

Admittance; "of Venetian ad." = "admitted from Venice"; III. iii. 58; "of great a." = admitted into the best company; II. ii. 230.

Adversary, used jestingly for "advocate" by the host; II. iii. 94.

Affecting, full of affectation; II. i. 145.

Aggravate his style, i.e. increase his title; II. ii. 291.

Aim, "to cry aim"; an expression borrowed from archery = to encourage the archers by crying out "aim," hence to encourage, applaud; III. ii. 42.

All-hallowmas, November 1; *i.e.* about five weeks after Michaelmas; Simple blunders in putting it "a fortnight afore Michaelmas"; I. i. 203.

Allicholy, Mistress Quickley's corruption of melancholy; I. iv. 158.

Alligant, Mistress Quickly's error for "elegant"; II. ii. 69.

Allowed, approved; II. ii. 232.

Amaimon, name of a devil whose dominion is on the north part of the infernal gulph; II. ii. 305.

Amaze, confuse; V. v. 224.

Angel, a gold coin valued at ten shillings (used quibblingly); I. iii. 57, 61.

Anthropophaginian, cannibal; IV. v. 10.

Armigero; Slender's error for "armiger"; his knowledge of Latin is derived from attestations, *e.g.* "Coram me, Roberto Shallow, armigero, etc."; I. i. 9.

Authentic, of acknowledged authority; II. ii. 231.

Avised, advised, informed; "are you a. of that" = "have you found it out?" I. iv. 103.

Baille, deliver, bring (the Folios read "ballow"); I. iv. 90.

Banbury cheese, in allusion to Slender's thinness, B. cheese being proverbially thin; I. i. 127.

Barbason, name of a demon; II. ii. 305.

Bede, the name of a fairy; V. v. 52.

Bestow, stow away, lodge; IV. ii. 46.

Bilbo, v. *Latten bilbo.*

Birding-piece, a gun to shoot birds with; IV. ii. 56.

Birding-piece.
From a specimen (*temp.* James I.) preserved at Goodrich Court.

Bloody fire, fire in the blood; V. v. 99.

Boitier, "a surgeon's case of oyntment" (the Quarto reads "my oyntment"); I. iv. 47.

Bold-beating, apparently = brow-beating; II. ii. 29.

Bolt, v. *Shaft.*

Book of Riddles, a popular book of the day, referred to as early as 1575; the earliest extant edition bears date 1629:—"*The Booke of Merry Riddles, together with proper Questions and Witty Proverbs to make pleasant pastime; no less useful than behovefull for any yong man or child to know if he be quick-witted or no*"; I. i. 201.

Book of Songs and Sonnets; Slender is perhaps alluding to "*Songs and Sonnets written by the Right Honourable Lord Henry Howard, late Earle of Surrey and others*" (pub. 1557); I. i. 197.

Breed-bate, one who stirs up "bate," or contention; I. iv. 12.

Brewage, drink brewed; III. v. 32.

Buck, used quibblingly with reference to the buck and its horns; III. iii. 160.

Buck-basket, a basket for clothes which were to be bucked or washed; III. iii. 2.

Bucking, washing; III. iii. 133.

Bucklersbury, Cheapside, where the druggists and grocers lived; III. iii. 74.

Buck-washing, laundry; III. iii. 158.

Bully-rook, dashing fellow; I. iii. 2.

Bully-stale; v. *Stale.*

Buttons; "'tis in his buttons" = 'tis within his compass; he will succeed; perhaps an allusion to the flower called "bachelor's buttons," by means of which the success of love was divined; III. ii. 68.

Cain-coloured beard; Cain was represented in old tapestries with a yellowish beard; I. iv. 23.

Canaries, probably Mistress Quickly's version of "quandary" (pronounced candary); II. ii. 61.

Canary, wine from the Canary Islands, sweet sack; III. ii. 86 [with a quibble on "canary" in the sense of a quick, lively dance; III. ii. 88].

Careires, the curvetting of a horse; "to passe a careire is but to runne with strength and courage such a convenient course as is meete for his ability"; I. i. 177.

Carrion, used as a term of contempt; III. iii. 195.

Carves, makes a sign of favour; I. iii. 46.

Cashiered, in Bardolph's slang it seems to mean "eased of his cash"; I. i. 176.

Castalion, King-Urinal; a nonsensical title which the host gives to Caius; "Castalion" = Castilian, with perhaps a quibbling reference to the medical practice of "casting the water" of the patient; II. iii. 34 (*v.* Notes).

Cataian, an inhabitant of Cataia or "Cathay" (China); a thief, used as term of reproach; II. i. 148.

Cat-a-mountain, wild-cat, leopard (used adjectivally); II. ii. 28.

Charactery, characters, writing; V. v. 76.

Charge, to put to expense; II. ii. 168.

Chariness, scrupulousness; II. i. 102.

Charms, love-charms, enchantments; II. ii. 106.

Cheater, escheater, an officer of the Exchequer, employed to exact forfeitures (used quibblingly); I. iii. 74.

Clapper-claw, thrash; II. iii. 66 (*cp.* 67, 69).

Coat, coat-of-arms; I. i. 17.

Cock and pie, a vulgar corruption of "God" and "Pie" (the service-book of the Romish Church); I. i. 304.

Cog, to wheedle; III. iii. 47.

Cogging, deceiving; III. i. 119.

Colours, ensigns; III. iv. 86.

Come off, to pay handsomely; IV. iii. 11.

Companion, fellow (in a bad sense); III. i. 119.

Cony-catch, to poach, pilfer; I. iii. 34.

Cony-catching, poaching, pilfering; I. i. 125.

Coram; probably due to the formula "jurat coram me," or a corruption of "quorum" ("quorumesse volumus" in a Justice's commission); both forms "corum" and "coram" are found as part of the title of "a justice of the peace"; I. i. 6.

Cornuto, cuckold; III. v. 68.

Cotsall, an allusion to the annual sports on the Cotswold Hills, Gloucestershire; I. i. 91 (*v.* Notes).

Couch, crouch; V. ii. 1.

Counter-gate, the entrance to one of the Counter Prisons in London; III. iii. 80.

Country, district; I. i. 219.

Cowl-staff, a pole on which a tub or basket is borne between two persons; III. iii. 149.

Cozeners, sharpers (? play on "Cozen-Germans," *cp.* IV. v. 78); IV. v. 66.

Cuckoo-birds, with allusion to cuckolds; II. i. 128.

Curtal, having a docked tail; "a curtal dog" = a dog unfit for the chase, or one that has missed the game; II. i. 114.

Custalorum; Shallow's corruption of "Custos Rotulorum"; I. i. 7.

Cut and long tail, any kind of dogs, curtal dogs or long-tailed (hence, come who will to contend with me); III. iv. 49.

Dagger; "playing at sword and d."; a blunt blade used in place of the buckler; I. i. 284.

From a black-letter ballad ("A Looking-Glasse for Maids, or the Downfall of two desperate Lovers . . .").

Datchet-mead, in Windsor; III. iii. 14, etc.

Daubery, imposture; IV. ii. 177.

Defy, reject; II. ii. 74.

Detest; Mistress Quickly's error for "protest"; I. iv. 154.

Dickens (exclamatory), the devil; probably = devilkins; III. ii. 16.

Diffused, discordant; IV. iv. 55.

Dissolved, and dissolutely; Slender's error for "resolved, and resolutely"; I. i. 251.

Dole, portion; "happy man be his d." = "happiness be his portion"; III. iv. 68.

Drumble, dawdle; III. iii. 149.

Eld, old age, used in the sense of "old persons"; IV. iv. 37.

Elder; "heart of elder" = weak, faint-hearted; the elder has no heart; used in contrast to "heart of oak"; II. iii. 30.

Ensconce, to shelter under protection of a sconce or fort; II. ii. 28.

Ephesian, boon-companion (an allusion perhaps to St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. ii. 10); IV. v. 18.

Eringoes, sea-holly (supposed to possess aphrodisiac qualities); V. v. 22.

Esquire, a gentleman next in degree below a knight; I. i. 4.

Eyas-musket, young male sparrow-hawk; III. iii. 21.

Fap, evidently a cant term for "fuddled"; I. i. 176.

Fartuous; Mistress Quickly's pronunciation of "virtuous"; II. ii. 99.

Fault, misfortune; I. i. 94; III. iii. 220.

Faustuses; "three Doctor F." (*cp.* "*Mephostophilus*"); IV. v. 70.

Fights (a sea-term), the canvas that hangs round the ship in a fight, to screen the combatants; II. ii. 140.

Fine and recovery, a term of law denoting absolute ownership; IV. ii. 212.

Flannel, originally manufactured in Wales, hence ludicrously used for a Welshman; V. v. 167.

Flemish, given to drink like a Fleming; the Dutch were notorious drunkards; II. i. 23.

Foin, to thrust in fencing; II. iii. 24.

Fortune thy foe, an allusion to the old ballad "Fortune my foe"; III. iii. 65.

Frampold, quarrelsome; II. ii. 92.

French thrift; Falstaff alludes to the practice of making a richly-dressed page take the place of a band of retainers; I. iii. 90.

Frize, a kind of coarse woollen stuff manufactured by Flemings in Wales; V. v. 142.

Froth, to make a tankard foam; I. iii. 14.

Fullam, a loaded die (so called from Fulham, where false dice were apparently manufactured); I. iii. 91.

Gallimaufry, "hotch-potch," used by Pistol for "the whole sex"; II. i. 119.

Gar, Dr. Caius' pronunciation of "God"; I. iv. 111, etc.

Geminy, a pair; II. ii. 8.

Ging, gang; IV. ii. 118.

Good-jer, supposed to be a corruption of the French word *goujère,* the name of a disease; used as a slight curse; I. iv. 126.

Good life, good name; III. iii. 121.

Gourd, some instrument of false gaming; I. iii. 91.

Grated upon, irritated, vexed; II. ii. 6.

Groat, piece of money valued at fourpence; I. i. 151.

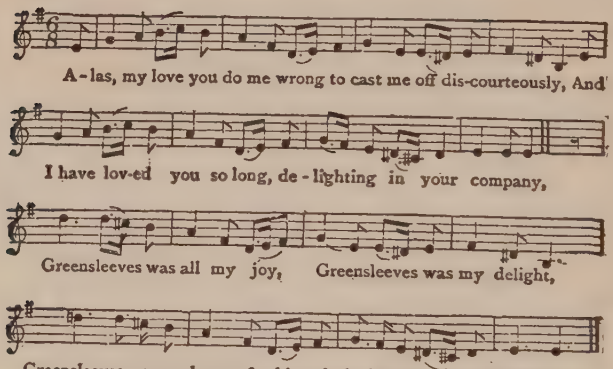
Green Sleeves, an old popular ballad tune, prob. of Henry VIIIth's time, still extant (see next page); II. i. 64

Hack, (?) "to become cheap and common," perhaps with a play on "hack," to kick; II. i. 52; IV. i. 65.

Hair; "against the hair," *i.e.* "against the grain," refers to the stroking of an animal's hair the wrong way; II. iii. 41.

Hang together, to hold together (without altogether collapsing); III. ii. 11.

The Ballad of Green Sleeves.


A-las, my love you do me wrong to cast me off dis-courteously, And
I have lov-ed you so long, de-lighting in your company,
Greensleeves was all my joy, Greensleeves was my delight,
Greensleeves was my heart of gold, and who but my Lady Greensleeves.

From Naylor's *Shakespeare and Music.*

Hawthorn-buds, dandies; III. iii. 72.

Hector, cant term for a sharper; I. iii. 11.

Herod, represented as a swaggering tyrant in the old miracle plays; II. i. 20.

Hick, (?) to fight; Mistress Quickly's interpretation of "hic"; probably something coarse is intended; IV. i. 65.

High and low, i.e. high and low throws (the former were the numbers 4, 5, 6, the latter 1, 2, 3); I. iii. 93.

Hinds, servants; III. v. 96.

Hodge-pudding, probably something similar to a hodge-podge; V. v. 155.

Horn-mad, mad as a wicked bull; I. iv. 51.

Humour (ridiculed as a much misused word of fashion; particularly used by Nym); I. i. 132, 163, 165, etc.

Hungarian; (used quibblingly) the Hungarian wars attracted many English volunteers, who subsequently returned to England impoverished; I. iii. 21. (The first and second Quartos read "Gongarian.")

Image, idea, conception; IV. vi. 17.

Infection, Mistress Quickly's error for "affection"; II. ii. 118.

Intention, intentness; I. iii. 70.

Jack-a-Lent, a small stuffed puppet thrown at during Lent; III. iii. 25; V. v. 131.

Jay, used metaphorically for a loose woman; III. iii. 41.

Kibe, chilblain; I. iii. 33.
Kissing-comfits, sugar-plums; V. v. 22.

Labras, lips; I. i. 160.
Larded, garnished; IV. vi. 14.
Latten bilbo, a sword made of latten, a mixed soft metal resembling brass; swords were called "bilbos" from the great reputation of those made at Bilboa in Spain; I. i. 159.
Laundry, Sir Hugh Evans' error for "launder"; I. ii. 4.
Leman, lover; IV. ii. 164.
Lewdsters, libertines; V. iii. 22.
Lime, to put lime in sack to make it sparkle; I. iii. 14.
Lingered, waited in expectation; III. ii. 55.
Long-tail, v. "*Cut,*" etc.
Louses, Sir Hugh Evans' corruption of "luces"; the joke was perhaps derived by Shakespeare from a story told of Sir William Wise and Henry VIII. in Holinshed's continuation of the Chronicles of Ireland, where the play is on "fleur de lice"; I. i. 19. (See Note.)
Loves; "of all loves" = by all means, for love's sake; II. ii. 117.
Luces, pikes; "the dozen white luces," probably an allusion to the armorial bearings of Shakespeare's old enemy, Sir Thomas Lucy; a quartering of the Lucy arms, exhibiting

the dozen white luces, is to be found in Dugdale's *Warwickshire;* I. i. 16. The accompanying drawing from Lucy's seal gives 'three luces.'
Lunes, fits of lunacy; IV. ii. 20.
Luxury, wantonness; V. v. 98.

Machiavel, used proverbially for a crafty schemer; III. i. 99.
Make, to make mischief; I. iv. 113.
Marry trap, a phrase of doubtful meaning; "exclamation of insult when a man was caught in his own stratagem"; in all probability its real force was "catch me if you can"; I. i. 164.
Master of fence, one who had taken a master's degree in the art of fencing; I. i. 285.
Mechanical, vulgar, vile; II. ii. 285.

Mill-sixpences; "these sixpences, coined in 1561 and 1562, were the first milled money in England, used as counters to cast up money"; I. i. 151.

Mephostophilus, used by Pistol; the name had been made popular in England by Marlowe's Faustus; I. i. 129.

Metheglins, mead, a fermented dish of honey and water; V. v. 162.

Mistress, the ordinary title of an unmarried gentlewoman; I. i. 48.

Mince, to walk with affected grace; V. i. 9.

Montant, a upright blow or thrust in fencing; II. iii. 27.

Motions, proposals; I. i. 214.

Mountain-foreigner, used by Pistol of Sir Hugh Evans, in the sense of "ultramontane," barbarous; I. i. 157.

Muscle-shell, applied by Falstaff to Simple because he stands with his mouth open; IV. v. 28.

Nay-word, a watch-word, or rather a twin-word agreed upon by two confederates; II. ii. 129.

Nuthook, contemptuous term for a catchpole; I. i. 165.

'Od's heartlings, an oath; God's heartling (a diminutive of "heart"); III. iv. 59.

'Od's nouns, Mistress Quickly's corruption of "God's wounds"; IV. i. 24.

Œillades, amorous glances; I. iii. 65.

O'erlooked, bewitched; V. v. 86.

'Ork, Sir Hugh's pronunciation of "work"; III. i. 15.

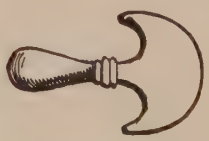
Ouphes, elves; IV. iv. 50.

Oyes, hear ye! the usual introduction to a proclamation; V. v. 44.

Paid, used quibblingly in sense of "paid out"; IV. v. 62.

Parcel, a constituent part; I. i. 230.

Paring knife; "glover's p. k."; I. iv. 21.



From a tradesman's token (XVII. Cent.).

Passant; as a term of heraldry = walking, used by Sir Hugh Evans; I. i. 20.

Passed, surpassed expression; I. i. 299.

Passes, goes beyond bounds; IV. ii. 122.

Pauca, few (*i.e.* words); I. i. 131; "pauca verba"; I. i. 121.

Peaking, sneaking; III. v. 68.

Peer out, probably an allusion to the children's old rhyme calling on a snail to push forth its horns; IV. ii. 24.

Peevish, foolish; I. iv. 14.

Penny, money in general; I. i. 62; (in ordinary sense) II. ii. 1.

Elizabethan Silver Penny.

Pensioners, the bodyguard of Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth were so called; II. ii. 79.

Period, conclusion; IV. ii. 222.

Pheezar; evidently formed from the verb "to pheeze," *i.e.* "to hurry on, to worry"; I. iii. 10.

Phlegmatic, misapplied by Mistress Quickly; I. iv. 78.

Phrygian, possibly in the sense of "Trojan," used as a cant term for a person of doubtful character; I. iii. 95.

Pickt-hatch, a quarter of London notorious as the resort of bad characters; II. ii. 20.

Pinnace, used metaphorically for a go-between; I. iii. 86.

Pipe-wine, wine not from the bottle but from the pipe or cask, with a play on "pipe" in the sense of instrument to which people danced; III. ii. 87.

Pittie-ward, (?) "towards the Petty, or little Park"; III. i. 5.

Plummet; "ignorance is a p. o'er me"; Falstaff evidently represents himself as the carpenter's work, and Evans as the lead of the plummet held over him; V. v. 167.

Polecat, used as a term of reproach, (the polecat emits a disgusting smell); IV. ii. 185.

Possibilities, prospects of inheritance; used also in the sense of "possession," which may be the meaning here; I. i. 65.

Pottle, a large tankard, originally a measure of two quarts; III. v. 28.

Prat, a verb formed evidently by Ford from Mother Prat's name; IV. ii. 184.

Preeches, breached for flogging; IV. i. 78.

Presently, immediately; III. iii. 90.

Pribbles and Prabbles, petty wranglings, tittle-tattles (used by Sir Hugh Evans); I. i. 56.

Primero, a game of cards; IV. v. 104.

Properties, used technically for the necessaries of the stage, exclusive of the scenery and dresses; IV. iv. 79.

Property, a thing wanted for a particular purpose, a tool (to get out of debt); III. iv. 11.

Puddings, the intestines of animals were so called (*cp.* "Pudding Lane"); II. i. 32.

Pumpion, a kind of pumpkin; III. iii. 40.

Punk, strumpet; II. ii. 139.

Punto, a thrust or stroke in fencing; II. iii. 26.

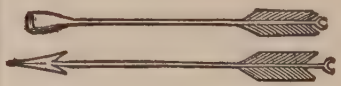
Quarter (used quibblingly); I. i. 24, 26, 28.
Quean, a slut; IV. ii. 171.

Rank, mature; IV. vi. 22.
Rato-lorum; Slender's corruption of (Custos) "Rotulorum"; I. i. 8.
Red-lattice phrases = ale-house language; a lattice window often painted red was the customary distinction of an ale-house; II. ii. 29.

From a token (*Green* Lattice in Cock Lane) of the XVII. Cent.

Relent, repent; II. ii. 32.
Ringwood, a common name for a dog; II. i. 122.
Ronyon, a mangy creature; IV. ii. 186.

Sackerson, a famous bear, which was baited at the Paris Garden, in Southwark; said to have belonged to Henslow & Alleyn; I. i. 296.
Sadness, seriousness; IV. ii. 90.
Sauce, "to pepper"; IV. iii. 11.
Scall, scurvy; III. i. 119.
Scut, tail of a hare or rabbit; V. v. 20.
Sea-coal fire, a fire made of coals brought by sea, a novelty at a time when wood was generally burnt; I. iv. 9.
Season, fit time (used probably technically for the time when the stags were at their best); III. iii. 162.
Secure, careless; II. i. 237.
Seeming, specious; III. ii. 39.
Semi-circled farthingale, a petticoat, the hoop of which did not come round in front; III. iii. 64.
Shaft; "to make a shaft or bolt on't" = to do a thing either one way or another; a shaft = a sharp arrow; a bolt, a thick, short one with a knob at the end; III. iv. 26.



Shent, reviled, punished; I. iv. 38.
Ship-tire, a peculiar head-dress, resembling a ship's tackle; III. iii. 57.

From Fabri's "Habite Varie" (1593).

Shovel-boards, broad shillings of Edward VI. used for the game of shove or shovel-board; I. i. 152.

Shovel-board, long preserved at the Falcon Inn.

Sprag = sprack, *i.e.* quick; IV. i. 82.

Speciously, a Quicklyism for specially (?); III. iv. 116; IV. v. 114.

Staggering, wavering; III. iii. 11.

Stale, the urine of horses, applied by the host to Dr. Caius; II. iii. 31.

Edward Shovel-boards.

Simple, medicinal herb; III. iii. 74.

Sir; the inferior clergy, as well as knights or baronets, formerly received this title, being the old equivalent of the academic *Dominus* (when applied to Bachelors of Arts at the Universities it was usually attached to the surname and not to the Christian name); hence *"Sir" Hugh Evans*; I. i. 1.

Slack, neglect; III. iv. 118.

Slice, applied by Nym to Slender; I. i. 131.

Slighted, tossed; III. v. 9.

Something, somewhat: IV. vi. 22.

Stamps, impressed coins; III. iv. 17.

Star-chamber; this Court among its other functions took cognisance of "routs and riots"; I. i. 1.

Stoccadoes, thrusts in fencing; II. i. 230.

Stock, thrust in fencing; II. iii. 26.

Strain, disposition; II. i. 91.

Sufferance, sufferings; IV. ii. 2.

Swinged, belaboured; V. v. 190.

Sword and dagger (see *Dagger*).

Takes, strikes with disease; IV. iv. 33.

Taking, fright; III. iii. 182.

Tall, sturdy, powerful; "tall of his hands"; I. iv. 26.
Tester, sixpence; I. iii. 94.
Thrummed, made of coarse, woollen yarn; thrum, the loose end of a weaver's warp; IV. ii. 77.

Thrummed hat and muffler.
From Speed's Map of England.

Tightly, promptly; I. iii. 85.
Tire, head-dress; III. iii. 58.
Tire-valiant, a fanciful head-dress; III. iii. 57.

From an engraving of a noble Venetian lady (1605).

Tricking, costumes; IV. iv. 80.
Trot, Caius' pronunciation of "troth"; IV. v. 89.
Trow, used by Mistress Quickly in the sense of "I wonder"; I. iv. 136.
Truckle-bed, a small bed, running on castors, which was thrust under the standing-bed during the daytime; IV. v. 7.

Standing and truckle-bed.
From an illuminated MS. of XV. Cent.
(The figures represent a nobleman and his valet.)

Uncape, to unearth a fox; III. iii. 169.
Unraked; "fires unr." = fires not raked together, not covered with fuel so that they might be found alight in the morning; V. v. 47
Unweighed, inconsiderate; II. i. 23.
Urchins, imps, goblins; IV. iv. 50.

Veney, a bout at fencing; I. i. 285.
Vizements = advisements or considerations; I. i. 39.
Vlouting-stog, i.e. laughing-stock; III. i. 116.

Wag, pack off; II. i. 234.
Ward, posture of defence; II. ii. 253.

Watched, tamed as a hawk is broken in by being kept awake; V. v. 107.
Whiting-time, bleaching time; III. iii. 133.
Whitsters, bleachers of linen; III. iii. 13.
Wide of, far from, indifferent to; III. i. 57.
With, by; III. v. 108.
Wittolly, cuckoldly; II. ii. 278.
Woodman, a hunter of forbidden game, and also a pursuer of women; V. v. 29.
Worts, roots (used quibblingly with reference to Sir Hugh's pronunciation of "words"); I. i. 121.
Wrong; "you do yourself mighty wrong" = you are much mistaken; III. iii. 209.
Wrongs; "this wrongs you," this is unworthy of you; IV. ii. 154.

Yead, an old abbreviation of "Edward"; I. i. 153.
Yellowness, the colour of jealousy; I. ii. 109.

Critical Notes.

BY ISRAEL GOLLANCZ.

I. i. 22. *'The luce is the fresh fish; the salt fish is an old coat.'* No satisfactory explanation of this passage has as yet been offered; various suggestions have been made, *e.g.* 'salt-fish' = the hake borne by the stockfishmongers; 'same' for 'salt'; ''tis ott fish in' (assigned to Evans), etc. May not, however, the whole point of the matter lie in Shallow's use of 'salt' in the sense of 'saltant,' the heraldic term, used especially for vermin? If so 'salt-fish' = 'the leaping-louse,' with a quibble on 'salt' as opposed to 'fresh fish.' There is further allusion to the proverbial predilection of vermin for 'old coats,' used quibblingly in the sense of 'coat-of-arms.' The following passage from Holinshed's continuation of the chronicles of Ireland (quoted by Rushton), seems to bear out this explanation:—"Having lent the king his signet to

From the Annalia Dubrensia (1636), a collection of poems laudatory of the Cotswold Games and their patron, Robert Dover.

seal a letter, who having powdered erinuts ingrailed in the seal; why how now Wise (quoth the King), what hast thou lice here? And if it like your Majesty, quoth Sir William, a louse is a rich coat, for by giving the louse I part arms with the French King in that he giveth the flower de lice, whereat the king heartily laughed," etc.

I. i. 46. '*George Page.*' Ff. Q_3. 'Thomas Page,' retained by Camb. Ed. though Master Page is elsewhere called 'George'; "the mistake may have been Shakespeare's own," or 'Geo.' may have been misread as 'Tho.'

I. i. 91. '*outrun on Cotsall,*' *i.e.* on the Cotswold hills (in Gloucestershire); probably an allusion to the famous Cotswold Games, which were revived by Captain Robert Dover at the beginning of the seventeenth century, though evidently instituted earlier; the allusion does not occur in the first and second Quartos.

I. i. 171. '*Scarlet and John*'; Robin Hood's boon-companions; an allusion to Bardolph's red face.

I. iii. 28. '*a minute's rest*'; a minim's rest" is the ingenious suggestion of Bennet Langton; *cp. Romeo and Juliet,* II. iv. 22, "rests me his minim rest."

I. iii. 46. '*carves*'; probably used here in the sense of 'to show favour by expressive gestures'; *cp.* "A carver: chironomus . . . one that useth apish motions with his hands."—Littleton's *Latin-English Dictionary* (1675).

I. iii. 51. '*Studied her will*'; so Qq_{1-2}: Ff, 'will' retained by Camb. Ed.

I. iii. 73. '*region of Guiana.*' Sir Walter Raleigh returned from his expedition to So. America in 1596, and published his book 'The Discovery of the large, rich, and beautiful Empire of Guiana' in the same year.

I. iii. 99. '*By welkin and her star.*' This is no doubt the correct reading of the line, and there is no need to read *stars,* as has been suggested; 'star' is obviously used here for 'the sun'; the Quartos read 'fairies.'

I. ii. 109. '*the revolt of mine,*' *i.e.* my revolt: Camb. Ed. suggest in Note 'mine anger,' but no change seems necessary.

II. i. 5. '*though Love use Reason for his physician.*' The Folios read 'precisian'; the emendation adopted in the text was first suggested by Theobald, and has been generally accepted; *cp.* Sonnet CXLVII: "My reason the physician to my love."

II. i. 220, 223. In the folios the name 'Broome' is given instead

of 'Brooke'; but Falstaff's pun, "Such Brooks are welcome to me, that overflow with liquor," removes all doubt as to the correct reading, which is actually found in the Quartos.

II. i. 224. *'Will you go, min-heers?'* The Folios and Quartos, *'An-heires,'* retained by Camb. Ed.; Theobald, 'mynheers.' Other suggestions are "on, here"; "on, hearts"; "on, heroes"; "cavaleires," etc. In support of change, *cp.* 'mine host' in reply.

II. ii. 155. *'O'erflows,'* so F_1F_2; Camb. Ed., 'o'erflow.'

II. iii. 34. *'Castalion, King-Urinal'*: Ff. 'castalion-king-Vrinall,' retained by Camb. Ed. but the first hyphen is prob. an error for comma—a fairly common mistake in this particular play, *cp.* nightly-meadow-fairies, V. v. 68, etc.

II. iii. 88. *'Cried I aim?'* The Folios and Quartos read "cried game"; the ingenious emendation, due to Douce, was first adopted by Dyce.

III. i. 17, etc. Sir Hugh oddly confuses Marlowe's famous ditty, 'Come live with me and be my love,' and the old version of the 137th Psalm, 'When we did sit in Babylon.'

III. i. 95. *'Gallia and Gaul'*; so the Folios; the first and second Quartos read "Gawle and Gawlia;" Farmer's conjecture "Gualia and Gaul" was adopted by Malone and other editors. Gallia = Wales.

III. ii. 73. *'he shall not knit a knot in his fortunes'* (which are now as it were unravelled).

III. iii. 42. *'Have I caught thee'*; probably the reading of the Quarto which omits 'thee' is the more correct; Falstaff quotes from the second song in Sydney's *Astrophel and Stella*:—

> "Have I caught my heav'nly jewell,
> Teaching sleep most faire to be?
> Now will I teach her that she
> When she wakes is too-too cruell."

III. iii. 65, 66. *'Fortune thy foe were not, Nature thy friend,'* so F_2 F_3 F_4; "foe, were not Nature," F_1 Q_3: perhaps better, 'foe were not. Nature is thy friend'; so Capell.

III. v. 4. The reading of the Quartos is seemingly preferable:—"Have I lived to be carried in a basket, and thrown into the Thames like a barrow of butcher's offal."

III. v. 9. *'The rogues slighted me into the river,' i.e.* "Threw me in contemptuously"; the Quartos read "slided me in."

IV. i. 49. *'Hang-hog is Latin for bacon'*; probably suggested by the famous story told of Sir Nicholas Bacon. A prisoner

named Hog, who had been condemned to death, prayed for mercy on the score of kindred. "Ay but," replied the judge, "you and I cannot be of kindred unless you are hanged; for Hog is not Bacon till it be well hanged" (Bacon's *Apophthegms*).

IV. ii. 20. *'old lunes'*; the Folios and third Quarto read 'lines'; the first and second Quartos 'vaine'; the correction is Theobald's; the same error occurs in *Troilus and Cressida*, II. iii. 139.

IV. ii. 97. *'the witch of Brentford'*; an actual personage of the sixteenth century. A tract is extant entitled "Jyl of Breyntford's Testament," whence it appears that the witch kept a tavern at Brentford; in Dekker & Webster's *Westward Ho* the following allusion is found:—"I doubt that old hag Gillian of Brainford has bewitched me."

IV. ii. 185. *'rag,'* so F_1 F_2; F_3 F_4 'hag,' adopted by Camb. Ed.

IV. iv. 43. *'That Falstaff at that oak shall meet with us.'* After this line the following words from the Quartos have been added in many editions:—

> "We 'll send him word to meet us in the field,
> Disguised like Horne with huge horns on his head."

IV. iv. 58. *'to pinch'* probably the correct reading should be 'to-pinch,' where 'to' is the intensitive prefix so common in old English, though it is possible to explain it as the ordinary infinitive prefix, omitted in the case of the former verb in the sentence.

IV. iv. 84. *'Send quickly to Sir John.'* Theobald ingeniously suggested "Quickly" for "quickly."

IV. v. 78. *'cozen-germans'* the first Quarto reads:—

> "For there is three sorts of cosen garmombles,
> Is cosen all the Host of Maidenhead and Readings,"

where 'garmombles' is very possibly a perversion of Mömpelgard; Count Frederick of Mömpelgard visited Windsor in 1592; free post-horses were granted him by a passport of Lord Howard.

The Count became a "Duke of Jamany" (Wirtemberg) in 1593; considerable interest must have been taken in the Duke about 1598. A letter to the Queen, dated August 14, 1598, is extant, in which the following passage occurs:—"I have heard with extreme regret that some of my enemies endeavour to calumniate me and prejudice your majesty against me. I have given them no occasion for this. I hope that when your majesty has discovered this report to be false, you will have greater reason to continue your affection towards me, and give neither faith nor

credit to such vipers." In the year 1602 appeared "An Account of the Duke's Bathing Excursion to the far-famed Kingdom of England" (*vide* Rye's *England as seen by Foreigners*).

V. v. 26. '*bribed buck,*' so the Folios; Theobald, "bribe bauk," adopted by Camb. Ed.: 'a bribed buck' was a buck cut up into portions (Old French *bribes* = 'portions of meat to be given away').

V. v. 42. '*orphan heirs.*' Theobald suggested "ouphen" (elvish) for "orphan," and he has been followed by many editors, but the change is unnecessary. *Cp.* "unfather'd heirs," II. *Henry IV.*, IV. iv. 122.

V. v. 45, 47. '*toyes*': Ff. Camb. Ed., *toys,* evidently to be read "toyës," rhyming with "oyës" in the previous line; similarly "unswept" should probably be "unswep," suggesting rhyme with "leap."

V. v. 94-96. *Cp.* Song of the Fairies in Lyly's *Endymion.*

V. v. 111. '*these fair yokes*'; the first Folio reads "yoakes," the second "okes." "Yokes" must refer to the resemblance of the buck's horns to a yoke; a sort of sense can be got out of 'oaks,' the antlers resembling the branches of oaks, but the first Folio reading seems preferable.

Explanatory Notes.

The Explanatory Notes in this edition have been specially selected and adapted, with emendations after the latest and best authorities, from the most eminent Shakespearian scholars and commentators, including Johnson, Malone, Steevens, Singer, Dyce, Hudson, White, Furness, Dowden, and others. This method, here introduced for the first time, provides the best annotation of Shakespeare ever embraced in a single edition.

ACT FIRST.

Scene I.

13. *three hundred years*:—Shallow here identifies himself with "all his successors gone before him"; an aristocratic way of speaking once common in England. Washington Allston was once the guest of an English nobleman who, though Shallow in nothing else, said he came over with William the Conqueror. We are indebted to Verplanck for this anecdote.

28, 29. *quarter of your coat*:—To *quarter* meant, in heraldic language, to have armorial bearings as an appendage to hereditary arms; as a man, by marrying, may add his wife's titles, if she have any, to his own. Sir Hugh, who must still be talking, mistakes the quartering of heraldry for the cutting of a thing into four parts.

49. To *speak small* means much the same as what old Lear so touchingly says over his dying Cordelia: "Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman."

114. *But not kissed your keeper's daughter?*—Scott in *Kenilworth* suggests that this was part of the charge made against the Poet by Sir Thomas Lucy.

118 *et seq. Council* and *counsel,* just below, are probably a quibble, the one meaning the Star-Chamber, the other being used in the sense of *secresy.*

204. *Michaelmas*:—This is probably a blunder on Simple's part for *Martlemas,* according to Hudson. Theobald substituted Martlemas, "not believing that any blunder was intended."

304. *cock and pie*:—This phrase occurs in several old plays, and once again in Shakespeare, 2 *Henry IV.*, V. i. 1; but its origin and import have not been satisfactorily explained. The most likely account seems to be, that it was a humorous oath, the *Cock* and *Magpie,* having been, it seems, an ancient and favourite ale-house sign. Some think, however, that *cock* was a corruption of the sacred name, and that *pie* referred to the table in the Roman service-book showing the service for the day.

Scene III.

9. *Keisar* is an old form of *Cæsar,* the general term for an emperor; *Kings* and *Keisars* being a common phrase.

Scene IV.

5. *Old* is here intensive, much the same as *huge*; a common use of the word in the Poet's time. Thus we have *old* coil in *Much Ado About Nothing.*

8. *we'll have a posset*:—A *posset,* according to Randle Holme, in his *Academy of Armourie,* 1688, is "hot milk poured on ale or sack, having sugar, grated bisket, and eggs, with other ingredients, boiled in it, which goes all to a curd."

8, 9. *soon at night*:—Hudson states that *soon at* is a phrase occurring repeatedly in Shakespeare; as "*soon at* five o'clock," and "*soon at* supper-time," where it means *about,* or something akin to that word.

28. *warrener*:—The keeper of a warren.

165, 166. *the next time we have confidence*:—Hudson is of opinion that *confidence* is a "Quicklyism for *conference.*"

ACT SECOND.

Scene I.

52. *These knights will hack*:—This is probably a covert reflection upon the prodigal distribution of the honour of knighthood by King James. "These knights will soon become so *hackneyed* that your honour will not be increased by becoming one."

54. *We burn daylight*:—A proverbial phrase, derived from burning lamps by daylight: "We waste time."

121. *With liver burning hot*:—Love, as the ancients understood that passion, was supposed to establish itself in the liver.

122. *Like Sir Actæon he*:—Actæon, in classical mythology, was a renowned hunter. He offended Artemis (Diana) by concealing himself near a stream in which she was bathing—thus obtaining stolen glimpses of her. The offended goddess transformed Actæon into a stag and his dogs tore him to pieces.

129. *Believe it, Page; he speaks sense*:—"Pistol," says Hudson, "knew beforehand what Nym was to tell Page; and now, as he infers from their talking so long that Page is incredulous, he speaks this to confirm Nym's tale, and thereby cut short the interview."

199, 200. *Good even and twenty*:—According to Staunton, "an old popular salutation, meaning twenty good evenings."

232. *with my long sword*:—Before the introduction of rapiers the swords in use were of enormous length and sometimes used with both hands. Shallow censures the innovation, and ridicules the terms and use of the rapier.

Scene II.

7. *your coach-fellow Nym*:—That is, he who *draws* along with you, who is joined with you.

11, 12. *Mistress Bridget lost the handle of her fan*:—Fans were costly appendages of female dress in Shakespeare's time. They consisted of ostrich and other feathers, fixed into handles, some of which were made of gold, silver, or ivory of curious workmanship. Thus in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*:—

"Her painted fan of curled plumes let fall."

19. *short knife and a throng!*—That is, go and *cut purses in a crowd*. Purses were then worn hanging at the girdle.

78, 79. *nay, which is more, pensioners*:—That is, gentlemen of the band of Pensioners. Their dress was remarkably splendid, and therefore likely to attract Mrs. Quickly. Hence Shakespeare, in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, has selected the golden-coated cowslips to be *pensioners* to the Fairy Queen.

150, 151. *sent your worship a morning's draught of sack*:—It seems to have been a common custom in taverns, in Shakespeare's

time, to send presents of wine from one room to another either as a memorial of friendship, or by way of introduction to acquaintance. In the *Parliamentary History*, we have the following passage from *The Life of General Monk*, by Dr. Price: "I came to the Three Tuns, before Guildhall, where the general had quartered two nights before. I entered the tavern with a servant and portmanteau, and asked for a room, which I had scarce got into but *wine followed me as a present* from some citizens desiring leave to drink their morning's draught with me."

157. *Via,* an Italian word, which Florio explains: "An adverb of encouragement, on away, go to, away forward, go on, dispatch."

192. *Sith*:—Since.

291, 292. *I will aggravate his style*:—That is, *I will add more titles to those he already has.* The term *style* was used in heraldry. Thus in Heywood's *Golden Age*: "I will create lords of a greater *style*"; and in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*:—

> "As to abandon that which doth contain
> Your honour's *style,* that is, your warlike shield."

304, 305. *Amaimon sounds well,* etc.:—Reginald Scott, in his *Discovery of Witchcraft,* may be consulted concerning these demons, as may also Randle Holme, in his *Academy of Armourie.*

312. *aqua-vitæ*:—Reed states that Dericke, in *The Image of Ireland,* 1581, refers to *uskebeaghe* (or *usquebaugh,* the same word as the modern *whiskey*), and in a note explains it to mean *aqua-vitæ.*

Scene III.

59. *Mock-water*:—Probably some allusion to the doctor's medical practice. The meaning remains obscure.

ACT THIRD.

Scene I.

17 *et seq. To shallow rivers, to whose falls,* etc.:—The charming pastoral upon which this burlesque is formed, is thus referred to by Izaak Walton: "'Twas a handsome Milk-maid, that had not yet attained so much age and wisdom as to load her mind with any fears of many things that will never be; but she cast away

all care, and sung like a nightingale: her voice was good, and the ditty fitted for it; 'twas that smoothe song which was made by Kit Marlowe, now at least fifty years ago." Walton next mentions "an answer to it, which was made by Sir Walter Raleigh in his younger days." The humour of these musical snatches, broken and disordered as they are by the anger and fear of the pugnacious parson, is most rare and exquisite. The poem by Marlowe, entitled *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,* is as follows:—

"Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggy mountains yield.
There will we sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, by whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals:
There will I make thee beds of roses,
With a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle;
A gown made of the finest wool,
Which from our pretty lambs we pull:
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;
A belt of straw, and ivy buds,
With coral clasps, and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me, and be my love.
Thy silver dishes for thy meat,
As precious as the gods do eat,
Shall on an ivory table be
Prepar'd each day for thee and me.
The shepherd swains shall dance and sing,
For thy delight each May morning;
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me, and be my love."

This poem is seldom seen without its companion piece, already referred to, and entitled *The Nymph's Reply*:—

"If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,

These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee, and be thy love.
But time drives flocks from field to fold
When rivers rage, and rocks grow cold,
Then Philomel becometh dumb,
And age complains of cares to come.
The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward winter reckoning yields;
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.
Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten,
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.
Thy belt of straw and ivy-buds,
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee, and be thy love.
But could youth last and love still breed,
Had joys no date, nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee, and be thy love."

24. *Whenas I sat in Pabylon*:—The old version of the 137th Psalm, which was drawn upon here, runs:—

"Whenas wee sate in Babylon,
The rivers round about,
And in remembrance of Sion
The teares for griefe burst out."

114, 115. *you make-a de sot of us*:—"Sot," says Hudson, "was much used in its French sense of *fool*."

Scene II.

30, 31. *twenty mile . . . twelve score*:—The use of the singular for the plural, especially in statements of time and distance, was not uncommon in Shakespeare's time. Thus in *The Tempest* Prospero says, "Twelve *year* since, Miranda, twelve year since, thy father was the duke of Milan."

66. *speaks holiday*:—To *speak holiday* means to speak in well-chosen language, or in a style above the common. So in 1 *Henry*

IV., I. iii. 46, 47: "With many *holiday* and lady terms he question'd me"—although here there is an implied sense of dandyism and affectedness of speech.

70. *no having*:—That is, no *property* or *possessions*. So in *Twelfth Night*, III. iv.:—

> "My *having* is not much;
> I 'll make division of my present with you:
> Hold, there 's half my coffer."

Scene III.

21. *eyas-musket!*—A young sparrow-hawk, *eyas* being a nestling hawk, and *musket* a male sparrow-hawk. So in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*,

> "Like *eyas hawke* up mounts unto the skies,
> His newly-budded pineons to assay;"

and again in his *Hymne of Heavenly Love*: "Ere flitting Time could wag his *eyas wings*."

25. *Jack-a-Lent*:—A small stuffed puppet that used to be thrown at for sport in Lent. So in Jonson's *Tale of a Tub*, iv. 3: "On an Ash-Wednesday, where thou didst stand six weeks the Jack of Lent, for boys to hurl, three throws a penny, at thee."

57, 58. *the ship-tire, the tire-valiant*, etc.:—Any fanciful headdress worn or approved by the fashion-lovers of Venice. In how much request the Venetian *tire* or head-dress was formerly held, appears from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1624: "Let her have the Spanish gait, the *Venetian tire*."

65, 66. *if Fortune . . . friend*:—That is, "if Fortune were not thy foe, Nature *being* thy friend." "Fortune my foe" was the beginning of a popular old ballad, wherein were sung the evils that fall upon men through the caprices of Fortune.

74. *Bucklersbury in simple time*:—*Simples* or *herbs* were sold at the many apothecary-shops in Bucklersbury; thus in *simple time* filling the air with the fragrance of rosemary and lavender.

80. *Counter-gate*:—*Counter* was the name of one of the London prisons, and was a frequent subject of jest. Thus Baret in his *Alvearie*, 1573: "We saie merrily of him who hath been in the *Counter* or such-like places of prison, He can sing his *counter-tenor* very well. And in anger we say, I will make you sing a counter-tenor for this geare; meaning imprisonment."

92. *the arras*:—"In Shakespeare's time," says Hudson, "the walls of rooms, even in the best houses, were unplastered, and were lined with tapestries instead, which were called *arras,* from the town of Arras in France, where they were first made. These, to keep them from the rotting-damp, were hung on frames at some distance from the walls." And Steevens says: "The spaces left between the walls and the wooden frames on which arras was hung, were not more commodious to our ancestors than to the authors of their ancient dramatic pieces. Borachio in *Much Ado* and Polonius in *Hamlet* also avail themselves of this convenient recess."

164. *I have dreamed to-night*:—Meaning *last night.*

Scene IV.

14. *thy father's wealth*:—"Some light," says Singer, "may be given to those who shall endeavour to calculate the increase of English wealth, by observing that Latimer, in the time of Edward VI., mentions it as a proof of his father's prosperity 'that though but a yeoman, he gave his daughters five pounds each for their portion.' At the latter end of Elizabeth, seven hundred pounds were such a temptation to courtship, as made all other motives suspected. Congreve makes twelve thousand pounds more than a counterbalance to the affection of Belinda."

92, 93. *be set quick,* etc.:—So in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*: "Would I had been set in the ground, all but the head of me, and had my brains bowl'd at."

105. *once to-night*:—That is, *sometime to-night.* Often so.

Scene V.

26. *I cry you mercy*:—That is, "I ask your pardon."

28. *Chalices*:—Cups.

84. *distraction*:—Hanmer changed this to direction, and has been followed by some others, including Hudson (Harvard ed.).

108. *with*:—As pointed out by Singer, *with, by,* and *of* were used indiscriminately with much license by our ancestors. Thus in a subsequent passage of this play we have: "I rather will suspect the sun *with* cold." *Detected* appears to have been used in the sense of *suspected, impeached.* Cavendish, in his *Metrical Visions,* has this very phrase—*detected with,* for *impeached with,*

or *held in suspicion by*: "What is he of our bloode that wold not be sory to heare our names *with vile fame so detected.*" *Detected* must have the same meaning here, for Falstaff was not *discovered,* but *suspected by* the jealous Ford. Some modern editors have unwarrantably substituted *by* for *with.*

ACT FOURTH.

Scene I.

4. *courageous*:—As Hudson conjectures, *outrageous.*

Scene II.

198. *cry out thus upon no trail*:—Terms of the chase. *Trail* is the scent left by the game. To *cry out* is to *open,* or *bark,* as the dogs do when they find the trail.

211, 212. *in fee-simple, with fine and recovery*:—Ritson remarks upon this passage: "Fee-simple is the *largest* estate, and fine and recovery the *strongest* assurance known to English law." So that the passage means, "If Falstaff be not, to all intents and purposes, the devil's," etc. Commentators have wondered how Mrs. Page came to know so much of legal terms. But is it not equally strange that Shakespeare's average characters, in their ordinary talk, should speak greater poetry than any other poet has written?

212, 213. *he will never, I think,* etc.:—Hudson says that this "is another legal phrase, meaning, 'he will never again attempt to ruin us, or to *lay waste* our good name.'"

Scene IV.

33. *takes the cattle*:—*Take,* meaning to *strike with disease,* is frequent in Shakespeare. So in *King Lear,* II. iv.: "Strike her young bones, you *taking* airs, with lameness." "A horse that is bereft of his feeling, moving, or stirring," says Markham (1595), "is said to be *taken,* and in sooth so he is, in that he is arrested by so villainous a disease: yet some farriers, not well understanding the ground of the disease, conster the word *taken* to be stricken by some planet, or evil spirit, which is false."

Scene V.

7, 8. *painted about . . . the Prodigal*:—"Bed-curtains and tapestries," says Hudson, "were often embroidered with figures from Scripture subjects, such as the Prodigal Son, Lazarus, and others. Shakespeare has divers allusions to them."

10. *Anthropophaginian*:—Man-eater or cannibal. Mine Host uses these fustian words to astonish Simple.

70. *Doctor Faustuses*:—Dr. Faustus, the German magician, had acquired a new celebrity through Marlowe's play.

Scene VI.

41. *quaint in green*:—*Quaint* here means *neat, tasteful, graceful,* with the idea of being, not fantastic, but elegantly fancied or conceived.

ACT FIFTH.

Scene I.

25. *life is a shuttle*:—An allusion to Job, vii. 6: "My days are swifter than a weaver's *shuttle*."

Scene V.

15-17. *Send me a cool . . . tallow*:—This is technical. It is explained by aid of Turberville's *Book of Hunting*, 1575: "During the time of their rut the harts live with small sustenance.—The red mushroome helpeth well to make them pysse their greace, they are then so vehement in heat."

20-24. *Let the sky rain potatoes*, etc.:—The sweet potato was used in England as a delicacy long before the introduction of the common potato in 1586. It was supposed, as also was the eringo, to be an aphrodisiac.

28. *the fellow of this walk*:—The *keeper* of this park or portion of the forest. The shoulders of the buck were among his perquisites.

43. *quality*:—Profession, or function.

47, 49. *Where fires thou find'st unraked*, etc.:—This office of

the ancient fairies appears to have been quite a favourite theme with poets. Thus in Drayton's *Nymphidia*:—

"These make our girls their sluttery rue,
By pinching them both black and blue,
And put a penny in their shoe,
The house for cleanly sweeping."

So also in an old ballad entitled *The Merry Pranks of Robin Goodfellow,* sometimes attributed to Ben Jonson:—

"When house and harth doth sluttish lye,
I pinch the maidens black and blue;
The bed-clothes from the bedd pull I,
And lay them naked all to view."

And again in the ancient song of the *Fairy Queen*:—

"And, if the house be foul
With platter, dish, or bowl,
Up stairs we nimbly creep,
And find the sluts asleep:
There we pinch their arms and thighes;
None escapes, nor none espies.
But if the house be swept,
And from uncleanness kept,
We praise the household maid,
And duely she is paid:
For we use before we goe
To drop a tester in her shoe."

54. *Raise up the organs of her fantasy*:—*Fantasy,* according to Hudson, "here stands for *sensual desire,* the 'sinful fantasy' reproved afterwards in the Fairies' Song." Clarke gives a different explanation, making the passage mean, "exalt her imagination by pleasant dreams."

56. *But those as sleep*:—*As* and *that* were, in the time of Shakespeare, used interchangeably.

65. *With juice of balm,* etc.:—It was a practice with people of luxury to rub furniture with aromatic herbs, in order to give it a sweet smell. Pliny informs us that the Romans did so to drive away evil spirits. "Perhaps," adds Hudson, "they found that penny-royal would keep off mosquitoes."

83. *middle-earth*:—Johnson says that "spirits are supposed to inhabit the ethereal regions, and fairies to dwell underground;

men therefore are in a middle station." Often used in this sense by old writers.

173. *affliction*:—After this speech the following, in accordance with Theobald's decision, usually has been added from the Quarto:—

Mrs. Ford. Nay, husband, let that go to make amends;
Forgive that sum, and so we'll all be friends.
Ford. Well, here 's my hand; all 's forgiven at last.

204. *postmaster's boy*:—Here too, following Steevens, many have inserted the following from the Quarto:—

Evans. Jeshu! master Slender, cannot you see but marry boys?
Page. O, I am vex'd at heart! What shall I do?

232. *evitate*:—Avoid.

243. *When night-dogs run*, etc.:—Here again we commonly have a line added from the Quarto: "*Evans.* I will dance and eat plums at your wedding." Malone says that Falstaff alludes to Fenton's having just *run down* Anne Page. "Falstaff," says Clarke, "here takes a final chuckle over those who have defeated his pursuit of the *dear* merry wives, by showing them that their *dear* daughter has been caught by the man who was not their choice, but hers."

Questions on

The Merry Wives of Windsor.

1. At whose request is this play said to have come into existence?
2. What relation in time do the events here depicted bear to those of *Henry IV.*?

ACT FIRST.

3. With what note does the play open?
4. With what trait uppermost is Slender first presented?
5. What is first said of Anne Page? Of Master Page?
6. Mention some of Sir Hugh Evans's verbal peculiarities. Compare him with Fluellen in *Henry V.*
7. What contemporary of Shakespeare is supposed to be satirized in this Act?
8. How do Falstaff and his companions meet the charges of Shallow and Slender?
9. What dramatic purpose is effected by the short scene with the three women?
10. Who proposes the match between Slender and Anne Page? Why does he wish to foster it?
11. What subtle observation of nature does Shakespeare show in the scene between Anne Page and Slender? Is it a great art to make a dull person interesting?
12. What new stage in the subordinate intrigue does Sc. ii. introduce? What new character is presented and how described?
13. Why was Falstaff glad to be rid of Bardolph? To what extent was Falstaff not averse to stealing?
14. What is the intrigue which Falstaff proposes, and what is the counter-action? What motive is established for this counter-action? Why, at the close of Sc. iii., do Nym and Pistol speak in verse?

15. Why are Rugby's qualities set forth? What trait of Mrs. Quickly is here illustrated?

16. State the complication of the intrigue involving Anne Page, Sir Hugh, Mrs. Quickly, Dr. Caius, and Fenton as active participants. Whose side does Mrs. Quickly take?

ACT SECOND.

17. This Act presents what picture of middle-class morality?

18. What internal facts determine the social status of the audience for which the play was intended?

19. Who informs Ford of Falstaff's purposes?

20. What tag of speech does Nym always carry about with him? What is its satirical import?

21. Does Nym seem more of a caricature—like many of Dickens's people—than a character?

22. What saved Page from suspicion of his wife?

23. Mention a certain modern type of character satirized in the Host.

24. What touches of real Falstaffian humour in the dialogue in Sc. ii. between the knight and Pistol?

25. What is the office of Mrs. Quickly in the main intrigue?

26. How does Ford, disguised as Brook, persuade Falstaff to accede to his designs?

27. Does Falstaff here, as in all cases in *Henry IV.*, cover his retreat with humour?

28. Contrast the jealousy of Ford with that of Othello. Why is not Ford a tragic figure?

29. Is Dr. Caius a character of comedy or of burlesque? Compare him with Evans in his power of provoking mirth.

ACT THIRD.

30. Describe the state of mind of Evans at the opening of the first Scene. What situation in modern comedy resembles this?

31. How does the Host act as pacificator? What is his reward?

32. Define the state of mind of Slender during the progress of the first Scene.

33. How does Mrs. Page add to the jealousy of Ford?

34. What was Page's objection to Fenton as a suitor for Anne?

35. Had Falstaff any trusty followers? How did Robin deceive him?

36. What impression does Sir John make as a lover? Is it possible that a man of his intellect could have been so played upon?

37. Where is the climax of the drama?

38. What does Page say as Falstaff passes him, as the latter is carried out concealed in the buck-basket? How does Falstaff later describe the scene?

39. How do Sir Hugh Evans, Dr. Caius, and Mrs. Ford comment on the jealousy of Ford?

40. Why are the practical jokes at Falstaff's expense continued?

41. Does Fenton recommend himself to you as a fit suitor for "Sweet Anne Page"? How does he justify his position?

42. What effect of contrast is secured in the fourth Scene? How is it shown that the choice of lovers really lies between two?

43. Is Anne a romantic figure? If so, why is not her love-affair treated romantically? How would you describe the animating spirit of this Scene?

44. What determining influence has the principal intrigue upon the manner of treatment of the subordinate one?

45. What redeems Falstaff from the ignominy of the ducking, as evidenced in Sc. v.?

46. How is the interview between Falstaff and Ford, with which the Act closes, justified from a dramatic point of view?

ACT FOURTH.

47. Is there episodic value in Sc. i.?

48. Is it good art in Shakespeare to make the second scene of Falstaff at Mrs. Ford's follow so closely on the lines of the first?

49. How is it saved from bathos? Wherein resides the real comedy of the Scene?

50. In what way does Sc. iii. connect itself with the plot of the play?

51. Describe the plot that is laid for the third punishment of Sir John.

52. Is anything indicated as to the belief in witches and fairies in the England of this period?

53. How are the two intrigues brought together into the same channel?

54. Is there any reason in nature why Page should not have been as jealous of his wife as Ford was of his?

55. Did the difference of the Pages, man and wife, over the marriage of their daughter ever amount to enmity?

56. In what way is Mistress Prat of Brentford made to assume an integral part in the plot? What effect of retrospect is gained thereby?

57. Why is Nym the one singled out for reference?

58. What subsequent parts in the action do Pistol and Bardolph play?

59. Recount the episode of the German impostors? For what does this episode prepare?

60. What effect of reality is gained by the introduction of elements but remotely allied to the main action?

61. How does this imposture of the Germans furnish a background for Falstaff's reflection in the fifth Scene?

62. Compare the account of his second discomfiture that Falstaff gives to Dame Quickly with the account of the first, delivered to Ford. Is the citadel of his conceit feeling assaults made upon it?

ACT FIFTH.

63. State the reason that led Falstaff to venture his fortunes for the third time.

64. What classical comparisons does he plume himself with?

65. What effect is there in the transition from this to the fear of the fairies?

66. Indicate the sort of penitence that disgrace stirred in Falstaff. In what quarter did he chiefly fear disclosures?

67. How did Anne Page and Fenton outwit the whole company?

---

68. Why is so much of this comedy written in prose? What parts are in verse; and what is the content of such passages?

69. Is the real Falstaff of *Henry IV.* to be seen in this play?

70. What are some of the characteristics that are distinctively his, and when are these prominent in this play?

71. Does the play furnish enough of the real Falstaffian humour to offset the feeling of injustice done to the fat knight of *Henry IV.*?

72. Compare respectively the Nym, Pistol, and Bardolph of this and the earlier play.

73. Compare Slender with Sir Andrew Aguecheek (*Twelfth Night*). Which is the more delightful?

74. Was Slender an unsuitable husband for Anne Page? Your opinion of Page and of the reasons why he encouraged the suit of Slender.

75. Will Fenton probably spend her money and then desert Anne? What may be expected from his antecedents?

76. What traits of character do you find in the two "merry wives"? What in Mrs. Quickly?